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**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**

**BOY WORK. FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES,  
1901-1930**

by

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in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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## **Declaration**

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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BOY WORK. FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES,  
1901-1930

**Abstract**

This thesis follows the route British boys (aged 12-19) took from education to employment between 1901 and 1930. A period of increasing concern about issues affecting the entry of youths into work; by the start of the 1930s, this study argues, there was a distinctive change in the lives of British adolescents as employment prospects weakened. The attitudes of contemporary policy makers and social reformers are considered, and the important themes of crime, leisure and physical wellbeing are interrogated. Two contrasting regions, the largely agricultural county of Devon and industrialised, urban Birmingham provide comparative case studies on reform and implementation of new policies. This addresses an historiographic gap in early twentieth-century boyhood as scholars have tended to focus on urbanised and industrialised areas before 1914, and in relation to inter-war Britain.

The challenges associated with improving boys' education and employment were debated, inquired into, and legislated upon in parliament. Analyses by Fabian Socialists, trade unionists, sociologists and educationalists enriched the debate. Local and national newspaper commentary and correspondence gave exposure to the discussions surrounding boy labour. This official and public discourse forms the core of the primary sources alongside expert inquiry and comment in books, pamphlets and articles. Together, they helped conceived the 'juvenile problem' studied in this thesis. But while scholarship, from specialist monograph to articles, has studied these early-twentieth century challenges for society and the state in dealing with the employment problem (and other problems) of boyhood into adulthood, detailed work on purely rural, non-industrialised regions like Devon is limited. This dissertation draws on a

rich archive of material from education authorities and employment bodies, much of it previously underused. The subject of 'blind-alley' work is important because contemporaries related it to poor education, and international economic competitiveness. The 1902 Education Act was seen at the time as significant, and although some scholars have questioned the rate of material reform this thesis argues that while if subsequent legislative steps were limited, ongoing debate over education ultimately contributed to the watershed reform of the 1940s. This study highlights the challenges of delivering educational improvements for agricultural communities and the implications for rural employment. While industrialisation and service-sector growth in cities like Birmingham provided new opportunities for juveniles, low-skilled, blind-alley work is shown to have persisted. The problems of working-class boys' education and work-preparedness in the early twentieth century pose questions about policy still pressing in modern Britain.

## Contents

Abbreviations.	p. 5
List of Tables.	p. 6
List of Illustrations.	p. 7
Introduction.	p. 8
Chapter 1.	Society, Philanthropy and Managing Boys. p. 37
	Early Twentieth-century Britain. p. 38
	Philanthropy. p. 43
	Boys clubs and organisations. p. 47
	Crime. p. 60
	Emigration. p. 69
Chapter 2.	A question of physical deterioration. p. 76
Chapter 3.	Education, 1901-1914: National developments and regional implications. p. 92
Chapter 4.	Early age employment, 1901-1914. p. 111
Chapter 5.	Education, 1914-1930. p. 134
Chapter 6.	Employment, 1914-1930. p. 167
	1914-1918. p. 168
	1918-1930. p. 175
Chapter 7.	Apprenticeship, 1901-1930. p. 198
Conclusion.	p. 227
Bibliography.	p. 236

## **Abbreviations**

BOE	Board of Education
BOT	Board of Trade
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OSC	Oversea Settlement Committee
PEC	Plymouth Education Committee
TUC	Trades Union Congress



## List of tables

1.1.	Devon Scout Numbers.	p. 57
1.2.	The age and sex of offenders, 1918-19.	p. 63
3.1.	Populations in Devon and selected other County Boroughs.	p. 97
3.2.	The number of Devon schools and average attendances, 1913-14.	p. 100
3.3.	Reasons for absence (boys), 1909.	p. 103
3.4.	Number of efficient secondary schools in Devon and selected rural counties, 1908.	p. 106
3.5.	Subjects for agricultural instruction and the number of centres given for their teaching in Devonshire, 1908-09.	p. 109
4.1.	Boys under fourteen engaged in occupations, 1901 and 1911.	p. 116
4.2.	Age group employed, 1911: Boys aged thirteen.	p. 117
4.3.	Age group employed, 1911, Boys under thirteen.	p. 118
4.4.	National occupations of boys aged ten and under fourteen, 1911.	p. 118
4.5.	Major Devon Occupations. Boys under fourteen, 1911.	p. 120
4.6.	Major Birmingham occupations. Boys under fourteen.	p. 120
4.7.	Licensed street traders in Birmingham.	p. 121
6.1.	Average monthly percentage rate of unemployment among insured boys in 1928.	p. 178
6.2.	Adolescent male employment, per cent, 1911 and 1931.	p. 179
6.3.	Hours worked per week, by occupation.	p. 193
7.1.	Apprentices: per cent of occupied boys under twenty-one in England and Wales, 1911.	p. 204
7.2.	Jobs advertising for male apprentices in Devon: 1900-1909.	p. 220

## List of Illustrations

1.	Map of Devonshire	p. 15
2.	Map of the City of Birmingham	p. 18
1.3.	Drill for boys in London, 1912	p. 54
1.4.	Member of the Boys' Brigade	p. 55
1.5.	<i>Punch</i> cartoon, 'Boy Scout'	p. 58
4.1.	'Boys at the factory gate'	p. 127
5.1.	<i>Punch</i> , cartoon, 'Elementary Education'	p. 150
5.2.	A Devonshire elementary school	p. 156
5.3.	A Birmingham elementary school	p. 157
7.1.	<i>Punch</i> , cartoon, 'An Apprentice'	p. 209

## Introduction

### Study objectives

In 1898 a survey of 20,000 elementary schools in England found that 144,000 boys registered as pupils were working for wages outside school hours.<sup>1</sup> Examples from the survey included the case of a boy who rose at 3.00 a.m. to work for his father, and again after school until 9.00 p.m. He was described as being so tired that he often fell asleep at his desk. By 1918 compulsory education to the age of fourteen and employment byelaws had made this situation virtually impossible. This study follows the route taken from education to employment by boys and adolescents in the early twentieth century to see why changes occurred, and understand society's evolving attitudes towards their education and employment.<sup>2</sup>

Challenges concerning children's education and their route to work, including associated issues like crime, were not new at the turn of the twentieth century. The 1870 Education Act with its commitment to the provision of education on a national scale was an example of progressive reform,<sup>3</sup> and *The Times* claimed in 1881 that progress made in education had contributed to keeping children off the streets. It noted, however, that more needed to be done to solve the problem of 'improper hours of employment.'<sup>4</sup> In 1900 a committee sat in London to consider a 'cure' for juvenile crime. Consisting of elected politicians, religious leaders, and members from boys clubs, university settlements and school boards, they described hooligans as being 'half-educated lads and lasses' who on leaving school found employment in precarious and short-lived occupations like messengers, errand boys and casual work, but it concluded that hooliganism was 'no new phenomenon,' and that

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<sup>1</sup> John Gorst, *The Children of the Nation* (London: Methuen, 1906), pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> For analysis of 'the determinants of age at starting work, of schooling and of occupational outcomes,' in the nineteenth century, Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1870 33 & 34 Vict. c.75 Elementary Education Act.

<sup>4</sup> 'Juvenile Offenders,' *The Times*, 14 January 1881, p. 8.

it had been coped with for years.<sup>5</sup> But concerns about unruly, unemployed youth appeared to grow and as this study explores, the influence of the press both national and regional, gave oxygen to those concerns. Other specialist and middle-class general periodicals, referred to in this study, also contributed to sensitivity about feral and anti-social youth. Statistical data and written sources, including legislation, official and expert reports and comment, provided the stimulus for media analysis and comment. This study is not a cultural history of boys lives in early twentieth century Britain, but their appearance on celluloid, in ‘documentaries’ like those produced by Mitchell and Kenyon and how they were the target of humour in literature and cartoons, as portrayed as a Scout and an apprentice in *Punch*, highlight how they were observed in the early twentieth century. Some of the cultural history of boys and youth in this period by Melanie Tebbutt, Selina Todd and David Fowler, through constructions of evaluation of masculinity and adolescent emotions, and of the expanding leisure opportunities of cinema and dancing, offers a wider perspective on juvenile life styles in the inter-war period.<sup>6</sup> Finally, expression of how boys and adolescents actually experienced their education and early employment is heard through the transcripts of the 450 oral history interviews undertaken by Paul Thompson for his book *The Edwardians*.<sup>7</sup>

While both education and employment have been broadly addressed by historians this study contrasts how national initiatives for education and employment were perceived and enacted in rural and urban environs, as exemplified by the two case studies of Devon and Birmingham. As Michael Childs has indicated, much of the research into boys’ education and employment in the early twentieth century is centred on the national picture.<sup>8</sup> In relation to

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Hooliganism’ and its Cure.’ *The Times*, 6 December 1900, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Selina Todd, ‘Flappers and Factory Lads: Youth and Youth culture in Interwar Britain,’ *History Compass* 4/4, (2006), pp. 715-730. Melanie Tebbutt, *Being Boys. Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years* (Manchester: University Press, 2012). David Fowler, *The First Teenagers* (London: Woburn, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Thompson, ‘The Edwardians.’ <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/QualiBank> [accessed 12 May 2019].

<sup>8</sup> Michael Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices. Working-Class Lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), p. xv.

Birmingham as a major industrial centre, this work provides insight into employment and education practice as they existed and evolved across the early twentieth century. Little, however, has been published about education and employment in Devon in the early twentieth century<sup>9</sup> and this thesis offers a new assessment of education and employment within a rural county.<sup>10</sup> The main employment in rural counties such as Devon was agricultural, but the county contains two significant conurbations in Plymouth/Devonport and Exeter which allows for the examination of how towns and cities related to their immediate agricultural neighbours.<sup>11</sup> The intention through the comparison of Devon and Birmingham is to contrast the way in which standard practices in education and employment functioned, and how reform affected fundamentally different locales.

### **Chronological scope**

Questions raised by prominent contemporaries about the conditions of ‘boy labour’ in Edwardian Britain are explored in this thesis, and additionally enters into the debate about the impact of the First World War and whether it transformed society or merely altered the speed of ongoing evolution, particularly as education and early employment were concerned. In looking at the challenges raised by the war this study seeks to understand if the pre-war interest in the development of youth, as defined by the economic historian and social critic Richard Tawney, continued. Tawney began his 1909 essay, ‘The Economics of Boy Labour,’ with the assertion that, ‘there has been in the last few years a remarkable concentration of attention upon the circumstances surrounding the entry of youths into industrial life.’ He acknowledged that

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<sup>9</sup> Sian Edwards claims that while youth has received significant coverage from historians the weight of scholarship has been mainly urban. See Sian Edwards, *Youth Movements, Citizenship and the English Countryside. Creating Good Citizens, 1930-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> For a history of nineteenth century rural schools in Devon, Roger Sellman, *Devon Village Schools in the Nineteenth Century* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> In 1914 the three separate towns of Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse were combined as the Borough of Plymouth, and in 1928 Plymouth was granted City status.

while interest in the subject had existed in the nineteenth century, ‘it has recently been developed at much greater length.’<sup>12</sup> John Davis has calculated that between 1900 and 1914 over sixty articles and books on the subject were published.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the education-to-employment challenge was not a uniquely British concern, as historian of youth studies John Springall observed when drawing ‘clear parallels’ between English and German middle-class reformers in their disquiet over ‘national efficiency, racial deterioration, and unemployment in relation to working-class adolescents.’<sup>14</sup> In the same year as Tawney’s paper, and reflecting broader public concern, the Liberal-leaning *Western Morning News* covering much of the West Country commented that, ‘in the question of “boy labour” lies the root of the greater evil of chronic unemployment, and to some extent of juvenile criminality and of hooliganism; and the question must be faced by social reformers, though remedies are not easy to find.’<sup>15</sup> Historians have since concluded that the early twentieth century was a time when social concerns surrounding boy labour increased as a fast-changing industrial sector moved towards factory-based, machine-orientated production, raising profound concerns about the consequences for school leavers and young workers.<sup>16</sup>

The important aspects of youth legislation at the turn of the twentieth century, summarised later in this introduction, were key to selecting a start date for this thesis. The reasons for choosing 1930 as an appropriate date for its conclusion are less to do with specific legislative changes and rather more with the changing environment that affected both education

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Tawney, ‘The Economics of Boy Labour,’ *The Economic Journal*, 19:76 (1909), pp. 517-537.

<sup>13</sup> John Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain. Images of Adolescent Conflict* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> John Springhall, ‘Entering the World of Work. The transition from youth to adulthood in modern European society,’ in *The Routledge Reader in History of Education*, ed., Gary McCulloch (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 236.

<sup>15</sup> *Western Morning News*, 1 June 1909, p. 4. Also ‘It is now generally agreed that the exploitation of the labour of young persons as they emerge from school is one of the greatest social evils of our time,’ *Daily Herald*, 6 May 1912, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> In particular, Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain. Images of Adolescent Conflict*, Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*; Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth. Age, Class and the Male Youth Problem* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); David Grey, ‘Entry to the Labour Market in Victorian and Edwardian Britain’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Queen Mary College, University of London, 1991).

and employment. Relatively healthy levels of juvenile employment ended with the arrival of the Depression, and education reform effectively ceased until after the Second World War.<sup>17</sup> For example, Stuart Maclure considers the (1931) report by the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education's, 'The Primary School,' as one of the most neglected but important interventions, suggesting it laid the framework for primary education for the period before and after the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> In its conclusions it supported the concept of a division between primary and secondary education at eleven plus, and it recognised the necessity for the streaming of different ability students by the age of ten. It also recommended that primary education be based on activity and experience rather than on the accumulation of facts.<sup>19</sup> After the 1931 report, the next major educational commentary was not until the consultative committee's paper on secondary education in 1938 which focused on grammar schools and technical high schools. The challenges faced by schools in rural areas are explored in Chapter 5 of this thesis, with specific reference to a 1929 report on Devon schools emphasising the difficulties of running rural schools with small numbers of pupils, unsuitably housed.<sup>20</sup> It is also instructive that the terms of reference for the Board of Education's consultative committee's report for 1928 included taking note of the needs of children in rural areas.<sup>21</sup> The chairman of the committee was Sir William Hadow who had chaired the 1926 consultative committee on adolescent education which delivered the Hadow Report. Among Hadow's recommendations were raising the age of compulsory education to fifteen (as proposed in the 1918 Education Act) which the government initially intended to legislate for in 1930, and the introduction of secondary education for all children.<sup>22</sup> If debates about these subjects did not

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<sup>17</sup> For understanding of post-Second World War education policy; Clyde Chitty, *Education Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014). In particular see Chapter 2, 'The Rise and Fall of the Post-War Consensus,' pp. 16-31.

<sup>18</sup> Maclure, *Educational Documents, England and Wales 1816-1963* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. 188.

<sup>19</sup> Maclure, *Educational Documents*, p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> Marjorie Wise, A Survey of Devon Village Schools, 1929, Dartington Hall Records, Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, T/AE/2/B.

<sup>21</sup> Maclure, *Educational Documents*, p. 188.

<sup>22</sup> The Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1926).

disappear in the years between 1931 and 1938, there were no significant, formal committee reports issued by parliament across those years.<sup>23</sup> The vision expressed in all post-1918 Acts and government reports was for the lifting of the school leaving age by the early 1930s, but the great depression saw policies of industrialised countries between 1930 and 1932 become ‘increasingly defensive and circumspect.’<sup>24</sup> These were all developments indicating a point at which educational and economic circumstances changed and that a new basis for analysis begins, and as such 1930 has been chosen as the date to conclude this thesis.<sup>25</sup>

### **The case studies**

The comment made at the start of this introduction suggested that most significant research has concentrated on the national picture and urban environs of England and Wales. Devon (Figure 1) has been chosen as a case study because it is representative of rural communities, as described below, and because very little work has been published on employment and education in early twentieth-century Devon.<sup>26</sup> David Parker’s wide-ranging popular history provides colour and detail on many aspects of Devon Edwardian life but lacks references.<sup>27</sup> In addition a comprehensive historical atlas of the West Country provides valuable information

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<sup>23</sup> Government plans for educational reform continued to be considered. Cabinet of July 1935 saw discussion about the school leaving age, the expansion of nursery schools, the promotion of physical activity in schools, development of the school medical service and the increasing of state sponsored scholarships for university places. ‘Cabinet Conclusion 5. Education Policy, 18 July 1935.’ <<http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-23-82-38.pdf>> [accessed, 1 May 2019].

<sup>24</sup> William Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939. A Study in Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, revised edition, 2002), p. 337.

<sup>25</sup> An example of the ongoing debate into the 1930s can be seen in Richard Tawney’s Sydney Ball Lecture of May 1934. Entitled *Juvenile Employment and Education*, it reprised many of the issues that had affected youthful employment from the turn of the century through to the 1930s. He drew attention to the lack of government activity in educational reform in the 1930s, suggesting there was a certain paralysis, and lamented the Board of Education’s ‘present policy of vetoing capital expenditure,’ which inhibited many ‘willing local authorities’ from instigating reform (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 16. Sian Edwards has also concludes that 1930 marks a time of change. ‘It is a truism amongst historians that the period from 1930 onwards witnessed distinctive and monumental shifts in the lives of adolescents in Britain,’ See Edwards, *Youth Movements*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*, p. xv. For urban analysis, see David Metcalf, ‘Urban Unemployment in England,’ *The Economic Journal*, 85:339 (1975), pp. 578-589, and David Hirst, ‘Juvenile employment policy in Edwardian Liverpool: a local study of rivalry between education and employment authorities,’ *History of Education*, 26:2 (1997), pp. 187-205.

<sup>27</sup> David Parker, *Edwardian Devon 1900-1914* (Stroud: History Press, 2016).



about Devon in the period covered by this thesis.<sup>28</sup> It incorporates statistics and information on education, farming and agriculture, and the development of tourism in Devon across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Finberg and Hoskins,' *Devonshire Studies* from the early 1950s offers an insight into specific elements of Devon's history, from the drawing of its boundaries to the examination of farm labourers through four centuries to the late 1800s.<sup>30</sup> And the Devonshire Association, founded in 1862, has published an extensive body of scholarly articles including on education and employment.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, eds., Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000).

<sup>29</sup> For education: *Historical Atlas*, 'Education in Devon in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century,' pp. 254-266. For tourism: 'The Growth of Tourism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' pp. 453-461.

<sup>30</sup> Herbert Finberg and William Hoskins, *Devonshire Studies* (London: Jonathan Cape 1952).

<sup>31</sup> The Devonshire Association is 'an educational charity dedicated to the study and appreciation of all matters relating to the county of Devon in south-west England.' <<https://devonassoc.org.uk/publications/transactions/>> Examples of studies relevant to my period; Stephen Essex and Mark Brayshay, 'Devon Tourism: The Story of the County's Economic Leviathan.' 150 (2018). The paper reviews the origins, historical growth and changing character of tourism in Devon from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. E.W. Luscombe, 'The Devonport Royal Dockyard School: Apprentice education, 1844-1971,' 137 (2005), pp. 245-270. The school's development and achievements.

Figure 1. A map of Devonshire.  
H.P.R. Finberg and W. G. Hoskins,  
Devonshire Studies, (London: Jonathan Cape 1952).  
p. 10.

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It is important to put into context how the English countryside was viewed across the thirty years of this thesis. Rural historian Jeremy Burchardt argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the countryside's interests were subsumed by the need to provide cheap food for the growing towns and cities and in doing so became marginal to the national economy.<sup>32</sup> But the increasing availability of cheap imported food made it difficult for British farmers to compete.<sup>33</sup> In Devon, land under arable cultivation fell from over 700,000 acres in

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<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England since 1880* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 9-10.

<sup>33</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, p. 307.

1870 to just over 400,000 in 1936 and at the same time permanent grass for grazing increased from under 100,000 acres to over 500,000 acres, figures substantiating the increased state of agricultural depression.<sup>34</sup> Decline was not finally lifted until the outbreak of the Second World War with the imperative for Britain to lift its food production to compensate for a drop of imported goods.

For many in the early twentieth century, the rural environment became valued for its aesthetic and spiritual values, manifested by the founding of bodies like the National Trust (1907). In addition it has been argued that by the 1920s debate became centred on whether the countryside was under threat or should be seen as ‘as an essential antidote to an urban-dominated world,’ a view highlighted by the foundation of the Council for the Protection of Rural England in 1926.<sup>35</sup> Reflecting the dilemma, a Fabian Society tract claimed that farming presented ‘one of the major problems the Labour Party has to face ... a hopeless subject which no Cabinet dares to tackle.’<sup>36</sup> In the 1920s the growing ownership of motor cars opened up the countryside for tourism, as noted by a near contemporary writer who suggested that ‘in the early nineteen-twenties the English people discovered the countryside.’<sup>37</sup>

Within this somewhat bleak picture it should be remembered that between 1914 and 1927 children in county/rural schools equated to around thirty-eight per cent of all elementary school children in England.<sup>38</sup> But as will be shown in Chapter 6 of this study, many rural schools suffered from poor accommodation and difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. While government reports and pressure from the National Union of Teachers in the mid to late 1920’s appeared to address these challenges, it was nevertheless observed that many of these schools still lacked support and guidance from the education authorities.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, it was

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<sup>34</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, pp. 307-308.

<sup>35</sup> Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Geoffrey Garratt, *Agriculture and the Labour Party*, Fabian Tract 228 (London: Fabian Society, 1929), p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Harry McGuire Burton, *The Education of the Countryman* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1943), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Burton, *The Education of the Countryman*, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Burton, *The Education of the Countryman*, p. 6.

reported by Board of Education officials that while the demand for secondary education nationally was increasing from ‘all classes ... spreading downwards,’ it was slower in rural areas.<sup>40</sup> As explained in Chapter 3, a problem for rural schools was the thinly spread population they served making it almost impossible to consolidate smaller schools to provide better facilities and teaching. The curriculum in rural schools was also often limited, addressing pupils who by and large came from local working-class families that usually worked in agricultural or associated trades.<sup>41</sup>

To compare and contrast the findings from Devon with a defined urban area, Birmingham (Figure 2) was selected as a metropolitan region with a substantial industrial base. As well as large, growing and internationally recognised companies like Cadbury, Dunlop, and Austin cars, Birmingham also incorporated many smaller manufacturing concerns, including a thriving and economically important jewellery sector.<sup>42</sup> Carl Chinn and Malcolm Dick have recently published what is claimed to be the first major history of Birmingham since the 1970s.<sup>43</sup> More specialised studies include Alice Mah’s analysis of employment policies which reflects on the ‘justifying arguments of various Birmingham organisations between 1870 and 1914 in classifying and treating the unemployed.’<sup>44</sup> Organisations included the Poor Law

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel A. Pigott, ‘Agricultural Scholarships for Rural Youth in England and Wales, 1922-58.’ *History of Education*, 30:1 (1990), pp. 17-45.

<sup>41</sup> For an analysis of rural education in this period, see Kirke, *Education in Interwar Rural England* (PhD thesis, UCL Institute of Education, 2016).

<sup>42</sup> For details of the Cadbury site at Bournville: Michael Colin Rowlinson, *Cadbury’s New Factory System 1879-1919* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aston, 1987). For a history of the British car industry in Birmingham and the West Midlands: Michael Beesley, ‘Changing Locational Advantages in the British Motor Car Industry,’ *The Journal of Industrial Economics* 6:1 (1957), pp. 47-57. For the range and size of industries in Birmingham: ‘Economic and Social History: Industry and Trade, 1880-1960,’ in *A History of the County of Warwick*, Volume 7, ‘the City of Birmingham,’ ed., W. B. Stephens (London: Victoria County History, 1964), pp. 140-208. For understanding of the unstructured and opportunistic development of the jewellery trade in the nineteenth century: Francesca Carnevali, ‘Crooks, thieves and receivers: transaction costs in nineteenth-century industrial Birmingham,’ *The Economic History Review* 57:3 (August 2004), pp. 533-550.

<sup>43</sup> *Birmingham, the Workshop of the World*, eds., Carl Chinn and Malcolm Dick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). Contemporary comment said, ‘about modern Birmingham there is indeed a spaciousness and air of modernity,’ Clive Holland, ‘The Story of Birmingham,’ *Warwickshire, The Land of Shakespeare* (London: A. & C. Black, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1922), pp. 154-173.

<sup>44</sup> Alice Mah, ‘Moral judgements and employment policies in Birmingham (1870-1914): multiplying the categories and treatments of the “undeserving”’, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 29, 11/12 (2009), pp. 575-586.

Guardians as they administered the laws in various municipalities, and trade union and friendly societies. Mah concludes that Birmingham Corporation avoided the structuring of labour markets, instead preferring ad hoc policies that supported the 'deserving unemployed.'<sup>45</sup> Usefully, for comparative purposes, in the early twentieth century the population of Birmingham was similar to Devon's, although by 1930 Birmingham's growth showed there had been a significant widening in size between the two regions.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the period 1901-1930, Birmingham's social and economic structure provided the antitheses to rural life.<sup>47</sup>

Figure 2. 'The City of Birmingham.' in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 7*, ed., W. B. Stephens (London, 1964), pp. 1-3.

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<sup>45</sup> Mah, 'Moral judgements and employment policies in Birmingham.'

<sup>46</sup> The 1901 census reported Devon's population as 677,000, and Birmingham's as 522,000. Reflecting urban and industrial growth 'by 1927 there were many Birmingham concerns employing several thousand workers and average size had increased in every trade' (VCH, Vol 7. p. 141), and the expansion of its boundaries as shown in figure 2, meant Birmingham's population reached one million by 1931 whilst Devon's (including the metropolitan boroughs of Plymouth/Devonport and Torbay) remained around 700,000.

<sup>47</sup> For a description of Birmingham's demographic growth, elite structures, industrial technology and educational development: D. Smith, 'Social Conflict and Urban Education in the Nineteenth Century: a sociological approach to comparative analysis,' in *Urban Education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed., David Reeder (Basingstoke: Taylor and Francis, 1977), pp. 95-114.

It might be argued that the starting point for this study could have been earlier than 1901, for example with the 1870 Education Act which has provided a natural point for a number of historians of education.<sup>48</sup> This is understandable when considering some of the significant changes it introduced, including the establishment of school boards that were empowered to raise rates to cover their running costs, the introduction of a fifty per cent grant from the Education Department to voluntary schools allowing them to continue in the face of competition from the newly funded board schools, and the requirement to provide education for all children between the ages of five and thirteen. Harry Hendrick starts his analysis of male youth in 1880 on the basis it represented the point at which ‘collectivist welfare policies’ began, together with a socialist revival, the ‘rediscovery of poverty’ and ‘the labour problem.’<sup>49</sup> This position is also taken by Lawrence Goldman who observes that in the 1880s there were rising class tensions and a belief that growing numbers were unable to take advantage of mid-Victorian reforms.<sup>50</sup> Hendrick also suggests that it was from this period that young male workers were increasingly seen by reformers and educationalists as having a role in ‘the politics of industrial relations.’<sup>51</sup> Charles More believes that the late Victorian and Edwardian-period marked the emergence of a clearly defined group of skilled workers, distinguished as ‘labour aristocracy,’<sup>52</sup> echoing earlier labour historians like Eric Hobsbawm, and Edward Thompson.<sup>53</sup> José Harris, reflecting on the concerns and emerging theories about how to measure and resolve the challenges of urbanisation and an industrial society, describes the period between 1890 and

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<sup>48</sup> Examples include, Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), and Michael Sanderson, *Education and economic decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence Goldman, ‘Octavia Hill, Beatrice Webb and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1905–9: a mid Victorian in an Edwardian world’ in eds., Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell, *Octavia Hill, social activism and the remaking of British society* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), p. 259.

<sup>51</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 20.

<sup>52</sup> Charles More, *Skill and the English Working-Class, 1870-1914* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1980), preface.

<sup>53</sup> Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 265.

1914 as a time in which policy debate around economics, ethics and political thought became central to British intellectual life.<sup>54</sup> In conclusion, 1901 lies at the centre of the late Victorian/Edwardian policy debate and at the beginning of a significant legislative programme affecting both education and youthful employment.

### **The thesis structure**

The context for developments in both boy's education and youthful employment across the opening three decades of the twentieth century is the first of a number of key themes considered in this thesis. Chapter 1 addresses the cultural and policy changes in Edwardian Britain. It draws together inter-relating issues from education, leisure, crime, physical development and early-age employment, and provides background for individual subjects addressed more fully later in the thesis. It explores the changing industrial climate from craft to factory-based manufacturing with its impact on youthful employment, amid the challenges of expanding towns and cities with their accompanying slums and a growing perception of working boys' susceptibility to troublesome behaviour.<sup>55</sup> It outlines the shift from Victorian philanthropy, motivated by a desire to alleviate hardship among rising numbers of the population and represented by bodies like the Charity Organisation Society. They evolved to work with local and national government in the 1900s, signalling a change from nineteenth-century philanthropy to twentieth-century social service.<sup>56</sup> Finally it discusses specific philanthropic and organisational strategy for boys and youths that included boys' clubs and organisations like the Scouts founded in 1908, the Boys' Brigade in 1883, and Dr Barnardo's in 1870 which

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<sup>54</sup> José Harris, 'The Webbs, The Charity Organisation Society and the Ratan Tata Foundation: Social policy from the perspective of 1912,' in *The Goals of Social Policy*, eds., Martin Bulmer, Jane Lewis and David Piachaud (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> David Reeder, 'Predicament of City Children: late Victorian and Edwardian Perspectives on Education in in Urban Society' in *Urban Education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed., David Reeder (London: Taylor and Francis, 1977), pp. 75-94.

<sup>56</sup> Herman Ausubel, *In Hard Times. Reformers Among The Late Victorians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), also: Michael J. Moore, 'Social Service and Social Legislation in Edwardian England: The Beginning of a New Role for Philanthropy,' *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 3:1 (1971), pp. 33-43.

in addition to housing and training destitute boys played a significant role in juvenile migration to Canada and Australia.<sup>57</sup>

Chapter 1 also summarises the interaction between the perceived problem of misbehaving boys and the state's increasing interest in juvenile affairs. It explores Government responses to youthful crime, and how it extended its role in attempts to shape and control juvenile behaviour in line with middle-class standards. It shows how youthful offending was seen as requiring specialist attention, signifying a move towards rehabilitation and welfare.<sup>58</sup> This included the introduction of juvenile courts in 1908 and an expanding role for the probationary service which saw an increasing role for women probation officers. Investigation of contemporary press coverage and government reports highlight the evolving attitudes to adolescent crime and punishment.<sup>59</sup>

Concerns over the deterioration of 'the race' is the theme in Chapter 2 which probes the divergence between perception and reality of youthful physical and intellectual degeneration, as comprehended by contemporaries, including those in the emerging eugenics movement and by current historians.<sup>60</sup> Middle and upper-class opinion was increasingly shaped by expanding urbanisation and its associated poor living standards,<sup>61</sup> which, it was believed,

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<sup>57</sup> Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee for the year ended 31 December 1922, [Cmd. 1804] XII.PT.2, 217, p.13. For the story of child migration to Canada, Africa and Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Joy Melville and Philip Bean, *Lost Children of the Empire* (London: Harper Collins, 1989), and Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Rush, 'The government of a generation: the subject of juvenile delinquency,' in *Youth Justice*, ed., John Muncie and others (London: Sage, 2006), p. 139.

<sup>59</sup> For scholarship on juvenile delinquency and neglect and the role of courts, John Clarke, 'Repression, Rescue and Rehabilitation,' in *Youth Justice. Critical Readings*, eds., John Muncie and others (London: Sage, 2006), pp. 131-132. This describes the difference between delinquent and neglected children, and how it was proposed courts would take an interest in the welfare of neglected children. For analysis of the English penal system and developments of child welfarism: Victor Bailey, *Delinquency and Citizenship: Reclaiming the Young Offender, 1914-48* (London: Clarendon Press, 1987), also, Kate Bradley, 'Juvenile delinquency and the evolution of the British juvenile courts, c.1900-1950,' *History in Focus* (2008), <https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-focus/welfare/articles/bradleyk.html> [Accessed 22 July 2019].

<sup>60</sup> The Eugenics Society was founded in 1907 with the aim of 'biological improvement of the nation and mitigation of the burdens deemed to be imposed on society by the genetically unfit.' (The Eugenics Society Archives, The Wellcome Library). Also: *The Eugenics Review*, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/journals/1186/>>

<sup>61</sup> For understanding of socialist attitudes to the eugenics movement, which were somewhat ambivalent, and bearing in mind many socialists and labour party members were themselves 'middle-class:' David Redvaldsen, 'Eugenics, socialists and the labour movement in Britain, 1865-1940,' *Historical Research*, 90 (2017), pp. 764-787.



were having a detrimental effect on the nation's physical and moral health.<sup>62</sup> Eileen Yeo submits that these fears reached a crescendo at the turn of the century because of Britain's poor performance in the South African wars, and in the apparent decline of industrial performance compared to America and Germany.<sup>63</sup> In focussing on arguments widely aired at the time, through formal reports and newspaper coverage, this chapter argues that contemporary concerns were largely overstated and that by the start of the First World War had generally ebbed away.

The role of education is a key subject of this thesis. Chapters 3 and 5 outlined consecutively in this overview encompass the whole period 1901-1930. In both chapters, education is considered both in its role of schooling and as a way of affecting the working of the labour market by, for example, reducing the number of children employed through longer compulsory schooling. Chapter 3 covers the period between 1901 and the First World War, a time considerably affected by the 1902 Education Act that Stuart Maclure claims was the first comprehensive education act.<sup>64</sup> Opposition to the 1901 bill was intense and it has been called the most controversial legislative proposal of the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Primary objections included the destruction of school boards, and the failure to reduce the influence of the Anglican Church. Nevertheless, it has subsequently been acknowledged as instrumental in closing inequalities between urban and rural schools through the wider county rating system and the introduction of more professional administration.<sup>66</sup> As outlined in Chapter 3, it also significantly increased the number of teacher training colleges and technical, secondary and

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<sup>62</sup> Richard Soloway, 'Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 17:1 (1982), pp. 137-164.

<sup>63</sup> Elaine Yeo, 'The Boy is the Father of The Man: Moral Panic Over Working-Class Youth, 1850 to The Present,' *Labour History Review*, 69:2 (2004), pp. 185-199. Also, in 1914 Britain's share of world trade in manufactured goods fell to 25% from 40% in 1870. Richard Overly, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> J. Stuart Maclure, *Educational Documents* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965), p. 149.

<sup>65</sup> Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920*, p. 221, and Roy Jenkins, quoted in, Simon, p. 251.

<sup>66</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, p. 257.

primary education by the establishment of one single authority (local education authorities) in counties and boroughs.<sup>67</sup>

Chapter 5 studies educational development between 1918 and 1930, a period dominated by attempts to raise the school leaving age to fifteen and to introduce compulsory secondary education, as proposed in the 1918 Education Act.<sup>68</sup> These objectives, and the need to teach technical skills for industry, were the subject of several government reports in the 1920s.<sup>69</sup> The implications for education in the light of the 1922 Geddes Report into government expenditure are also reviewed.<sup>70</sup>

The step taken by boys from education into employment is the fourth subject to be addressed. In the same way that I have sought to give an overview of my handling of education, this introduction covers juvenile employment for the period 1901–1930 as a whole and therefore, takes Chapters 4 and 6 sequentially. In addition, specific reference is made in Chapter 6 to the effect of wartime employment on school children and juveniles, and the implications for their post-war employment. Chapter 4 illustrates society's growing recognition of the need to protect boys between the ages of ten and twelve, in particular, from over-work. The strengthening of rules concerning compulsory education through the introduction of local and regional initiatives to limit the employment of young people is assessed. In 1903 the Employment of Children Act endeavoured to enforce longer attendance at school and to restrict the hours of employment for boys under twelve, primarily by giving local authorities the power to issue byelaws affecting the employment of children. The Act was based on proposals from the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children that met in 1901.<sup>71</sup> It was

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<sup>67</sup> Maclure, *Education Documents*, pp. 149-153.

<sup>68</sup> 1918. [8 & 9 G..5. CH. 39].

<sup>69</sup> Including: the Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent*, London: HMSO, 1926, and the Balfour Committee Report on Industry and Trade [Cd 3282].

<sup>70</sup> Committee on National Expenditure. First interim report of Committee on National Expenditure [Cmd.1581] p. 116.

<sup>71</sup> 1910 [Cd. 5229] Employment of Children Act Committee. Report of the Departmental Committee on the Employment of Children Act, 1903, appointed by His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

seen by many, however, as setting the regulatory bar too low, partly because it did not actually *prohibit* employment of boys aged eleven.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, the 1903 Act and the 1902 Education Act gave new or enhanced powers to local authorities, specifically to more clearly define the age at which boys could, or should, move from education to employment. The period before the war also saw the publication of significant government reports, and papers by influential observers.<sup>73</sup> Reaction to the introduction of employment practices introduced under local byelaws together with regional investigations into, among other subjects, street trading and agricultural employment in Devon and Birmingham, are studied in this chapter.<sup>74</sup>

Chapter 6 takes the period 1914-1930 as a whole, including assessment of the impact of the war. Post-war it was noted by the Juvenile Organisation Committee that while juvenile unemployment was localised and generally an urban problem it was largely improving, although there were fears that in the future industry was unlikely to be able to absorb all the young people entering the employment market.<sup>75</sup> It concluded that this could exacerbate the problem of ‘blind-alley’ employment, occupations in which employees could earn sufficient wages to be independent of parental control but unwilling to accept the lower wages of apprenticeships and workshops, leaving them exposed to a low-skilled, insecure future. Historians have subsequently debated whether or not the 1920s was a golden age for juveniles because near full youthful employment existed, even if it included ‘blind alley’ work.<sup>76</sup> Chapter

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<sup>72</sup> Frederic Keeling, *Child Labour in the United Kingdom* (London: P.S. King, 1914).

<sup>73</sup> For example: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX. Report by Mr. Cyril Jackson on boy labour together with a memorandum from the General Post Office on the conditions of employment of telegraph messengers. 1909 [Cd. 4632] and, John Howard Whitehouse, ‘Street Trading by Children’ in *Problems of Boy Life*, ed., John Howard Whitehouse (Westminster: P.S. King, 1912), p. 45. Also, Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life Labour* (Westminster: P.S. King 1914).

<sup>74</sup> For example: Bishop of Birmingham Committee, Report into Street Trading 1910, and the Employment of Children Act, 1903, in London School of Economics, Special collection HD6/155. Also, the Report to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department on the byelaw made by the Devon County Council under the Employment of Children Act, 1903 and on the objections thereto. By Samuel Pope, barrister-at-law. [Cd. 6988].

<sup>75</sup> The National Archives, Kew [henceforth TNA] CAB/27/267. Report of the Juvenile Organisation Committee on Unemployed Juveniles 14-16 Years of Age, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> See the conflicting views of, William Garside, ‘Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 30 (1977), 322-339, and Daniel K. Benjamin and Levis A. Kochin, ‘What

6 considers this debate and broadly concludes that claims it was a great age for youthful employment are overstated. The chapter also includes analysis of the employment opportunities that existed for adolescent workers, with particular reference to Devon and Birmingham.

Historians have written about different aspects of juvenile lives in this period.<sup>77</sup> David Fowler concludes that little is known about the experience of young people in the 1920s labour market, although he believes worries of contemporary observers over unskilled work overstated the ‘bleakness and insecurity of blind-alley employment.’<sup>78</sup> The subject, however, is complex, as argued in Chapter 6. While accepting Fowler’s argument that young workers often welcomed the type of work described as ‘blind-alley,’ as for example messengers and warehouse jobs with the associated freedom to move easily between alternative employment with attractive wages, the arguments based on the evidence outlined in this chapter contends he underplays the situation. Those juveniles not finding apprenticeships at age sixteen often remained in unskilled, insecure and low-paying employment. Barry Eichengreen, while in part holding similar views to Fowler about contemporary alarmism also notes it is possible that to some extent, ‘the number of unemployed youths was more seriously under-recorded between the wars,’ and that while a majority of juveniles experiencing unemployment usually found new work reasonably quickly, for ‘a significant minority unemployment was an extended and potentially damaging experience.’<sup>79</sup> Consequently, there is a need for further investigation of youth employment beyond the period of this study, into the 1930s, an era of global depression with wider implications for adult as well as youth work.<sup>80</sup>

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went Right with Juvenile Unemployment Policy between the Wars: A Comment,’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 32 (1979), pp. 523-528.

<sup>77</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, and Fowler, *The First Teenagers*.

<sup>78</sup> Fowler, *The First Teenagers*. pp. 7-41.

<sup>79</sup> Barry Eichengreen. ‘Juvenile Unemployment In 20th Century Britain: The Emergence of a Problem.’ *IRLE Working Paper* No. 9-87 (1987), pp. 1-27.

<sup>80</sup> William Garside, ‘Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 30 (1977), 322-339, and Richard Tawney, ‘Juvenile Employment and Education,’ *Sydney Ball Lecture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

The war years (1914-1918) are reviewed separately in Chapter 6 because unlike education where there was little change except for some relaxing of the school-leaving age to help the wartime labour market, there was a real short-term impact on youthful employment due to the absence of men and a concurrent demand for workers in agriculture and industry. Concerns about post-war employment prospects for juvenile workers triggered investigations and reports that had implications for the 1920s.<sup>81</sup> It has been suggested that the war ‘interrupted and accelerated many trends but rarely appeared as a major discontinuity,’ a conclusion with which this study broadly concurs, although the 1920s was a decade in which the attitude towards the treatment of adolescents clearly changed.<sup>82</sup>

Training for industrial society in the early twentieth century is the final theme addressed in this thesis. At the other end of the employment scale from ‘blind alley’ and unskilled employment, the question of whether apprenticeships were in decline, or even still existed, was a topic that concerned many commentators at the start of the twentieth century. Chapter 7 engages with the debate throughout the period from 1901-1930. Contemporary opinion often concluded that in practice apprenticeships were no longer relevant for industrial training.<sup>83</sup> Government reports, drawing upon evidence from a variety of interested parties in education and low-skilled employment, including workers’ trade and union representatives, also determined that the level of formal instruction was frequently poor or effectively non-existent.<sup>84</sup> In Birmingham it was reported that apprenticeships had ‘ceased to be a custom in the majority of the industries of the city.’<sup>85</sup> More recently historians have recognised that

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<sup>81</sup> For example, Reginald Arthur Bray, *The Problem of Juvenile Employment after the War* (London: H.M.S.O., 1918), also, Sydney Webb, *When Peace Comes: The Way of Industrial Reconstruction*, V. *The Non-Adult*, Fabian Tract 181, pp. 22-27.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Morris, ‘Clubs societies and associations,’ in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, Volume 3, ed., Francis Michael Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1992), p. 420.

<sup>83</sup> For example: Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life Labour* (London: King, 1914), p. 178; Arthur Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care* (London: King, 1911), p. 1; Edward Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in our Cities*, (London: Dent, 1904), p. 280.

<sup>84</sup> Second report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the depression of trade and industry. Minutes of evidence and appendix. Part I. 1886 [C.4715] pp. 7-98. Minutes 2159, 2246.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Apprenticeship Question,’ *Birmingham Mail*, 26 November 1918, p. 3.

changes to manufacturing processes often altered the way in which young people were trained and, therefore, while the traditional apprenticeship may have declined, equivalent instruction was often provided.<sup>86</sup> The view of one contemporary commentator that ‘under modern conditions there should be a variety of methods of teaching trades, since no one device can fit all sorts and conditions of employment,’<sup>87</sup> is arguably a realistic summary of the changing trend in skilled employment training.<sup>88</sup> It should be noted that the TUC was not so minded, claiming in 1921 that ‘today, under a bastard system of apprenticeship, the employer has escaped from all his responsibility without diminishing the obligations of the lads themselves.’<sup>89</sup>

In the early twentieth century it was acknowledged that children’s education should be enhanced and extended and their place in the workforce delayed, something reflected in both education and employment law reform. Nevertheless, despite efforts to broaden access to education and improve entry to early-age employment, class disparities continued with, in 1931, the proportion of children aged fifteen to eighteen remaining in education standing at only six per cent.<sup>90</sup> A 1967 study in Scotland showed that children who had benefited from legislative changes since 1910 were those of ‘clerks, commercial travellers and policemen ... children of manual and lower skilled workers were scarcely affected;’ the situation in England being ‘no better.’<sup>91</sup> My research confirms that little significantly changed for the prospects of young, unskilled workers between the 1900s and the 1930s. The definitions of apprenticeships, and blind-alley work might have altered as manufacturing and service industry jobs emerged and evolved, but low-skilled and limited-prospect employment continued.

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<sup>86</sup> Keith Brown, ‘Industry and Services: Employment and Unemployment.’ In *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed., Chris Wrigley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p.302; Keith McClelland cited in *Education and Economic Decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s*, ed. Michael Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.33; Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class, 1870-1914*.

<sup>87</sup> Norman Dearle, *Industrial Training* (London: Orchard House, 1914), p. 43.

<sup>88</sup> Humphries, *Childhood*, pp. 9-10, notes the importance of apprenticeships in the nineteenth century and also observes how ‘it adapted to better fit changing conditions, and so survived in the maturing industrial economy.’

<sup>89</sup> Trade Union Congress annual report, 1921, TUC History Online, p. 261.

<sup>90</sup> Gail L. Savage, ‘Social Class and Social Policy: The Civil Service and Secondary Education in England during the Interwar Period,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18:2 (1983), pp. 261-280, (p. 262).

<sup>91</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Working-class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.118.

In fact, the question arises if even today things have improved, as the prospect of long periods of unemployment for unskilled working-class juveniles remains, a challenge described by Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, an independent economic research institute. Writing in *The Times* in November 2018 he contended that,

boys from working-class backgrounds do especially badly. Our education and training system ensure that they have few chances to continue in good quality education and training post-16. That's why too many end up in low-skilled, low-paying jobs or, worse, wholly disengaged from the labour market.<sup>92</sup>

It is doubtful, therefore, that much has changed since Arnold Freeman's 1914 inquiry into the conditions of boy labour in Birmingham, and his conclusion that schools were only providing sufficient education for the 'all too moderate demands which industrial conditions make upon them.'<sup>93</sup> These demands Freeman described as 'requiring no particular skill, and no great ability or knowledge.'<sup>94</sup> Between the wars, the worry was that young people were not being equipped with vocational skills, and echoing the thoughts of Barry Eichengreen there was a broader concern that enforced unemployment led not only to a decline in an individual's future prospects but also to demoralisation, which was thought to be an ingredient for social disorder.<sup>95</sup>

More recent work on adolescence throughout early twentieth-century Britain provides a readjustment in the understanding of their place in society, a position with which this thesis concurs. Selina Todd argues that the historiography of the pre-war period is 'primarily concerned with the running of young people's daily lives, rather than with their representation

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<sup>92</sup> Paul Johnson, 'We must not ignore plight of low-paid men as we once ignored working women,' *The Times*, 12 November 2018, p. 43.

<sup>93</sup> Freeman was a British writer, philosopher, adult educator and Fabian Socialist. He was contracted by the Birmingham Education Committee to investigate the experiences and difficulties experienced by young working boys in the city. His work, *Boy Life Labour*, was published in 1914.

<sup>94</sup> Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 175.

<sup>95</sup> Gareth Rees and Teresa Rees, 'Juvenile Unemployment and the State between the Wars,' in *Youth Unemployment and State Intervention*, eds., Teresa Rees and Paul Atkins (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 17.

and treatment.’<sup>96</sup> Stephanie Olsen addresses how society perceived a new problem ‘character’ and determined how the ‘modern boy’ was to be made into a fit citizen, although she contends that at the end of the nineteenth century various institutions of formal education were failing ‘children, especially boys.’<sup>97</sup> The work of Melanie Tebbutt signals this change of emphasis, writing of attempts in the 1920s to improve understanding of male adolescence and concerns about ‘feminising trends’ which, she argues, resulted from increased consumer opportunities.<sup>98</sup> This change of emphasis is addressed by Michal Shapira in arguing that psychoanalysis has been largely ignored by historians of twentieth century Britain. She submits that in Britain from the 1930s it became important when thinking about democracy, mental health, childhood and the family.<sup>99</sup> Tebbutt also refers to contemporary psychologists who worried about working-class boys overprotected by sentimental mothers, and she notes the strong anti-militaristic sentiment which encouraged a more relaxed attitude to ‘the anti-social behaviour of working-class young men.’<sup>100</sup> For the ‘surprising’ permissiveness afforded young male offenders in the 1920s, Tebbutt cites *The Boy* magazine which suggested that decreasing juvenile crime figures owed much ‘to a kindlier conception of justice.’<sup>101</sup> This she puts down to a ‘greater awareness of the emotional and physiological changes of adolescence,’ resulting in a generally lower-key response to crime and punishment.<sup>102</sup> Stephen Humphries also takes the approach that from late-Victorian times much rebellious behaviour was due to social and economic pressure rather

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<sup>96</sup> Selina Todd, ‘Flappers and Factory Lads: Youth and Youth Culture in Interwar Britain,’ *History Compass* 4/4 (2006), pp. 715-730.

<sup>97</sup> Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), introduction, p. 1..

<sup>98</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 50.

<sup>99</sup> Michal Shapira, *The War Inside. Psychoanalysis, Total War and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, pp. 44-62, 70-105.

<sup>101</sup> *The Boy Magazine* was published by the National Association of Boys Clubs, founded in 1925. Their aim was to provide working lads with recreational interests, education, character and spiritual instruction.

<sup>102</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 49.



than pure indiscipline,<sup>103</sup> and Peter Rush concludes that juvenile delinquency was an ‘effect of social causes.’<sup>104</sup>

Investigating the path from education to early employment, this study is limited to the analysis of boys experiences because, as Childs describes in his study of late Victorian and Edwardian boy labour, there was an ‘all-pervading sex-based differentiation of the period,’ the life experiences and expectations of girls being so different to boys’ that to include them in the same analysis is of questionable value.<sup>105</sup> For example, the census of 1901 shows that nearly forty-one per cent of females in work were employed in domestic service,<sup>106</sup> and William Beveridge referred in 1909 to other forms of employment as, ‘low-grade women’s industries, jam-making, sack and tarpaulin work, match-box making and the like.’<sup>107</sup> Contemporary sex-based differentiation can be seen in the ‘Report on Boy Labour,’ by Cyril Jackson in the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws,<sup>108</sup> and Tawney’s ‘The Economics of Boy Labour.’<sup>109</sup> No corresponding weight of analysis exists for girl workers,<sup>110</sup> although some studies were published including Clementina Black’s review in 1906 of London’s trade schools for girls, with their ambition to provide ‘an opening for that mixture of general intelligence, adaptability and technical knowledge.’<sup>111</sup> But where boys and girls were considered in the same study as, for example, ‘Boy and Girl Labour’ (1909) written by Liberal politician and educationalist Henrietta (Nettie) Adler and Richard Tawney, published by the Women’s Industrial Council

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<sup>103</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels. An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (London: Blackwell, 1981), p. 151.

<sup>104</sup> Peter Rush, ‘The government of a generation: the subject of juvenile delinquency,’ in *Youth Justice. Critical Readings*, eds., John Muncie and others (London: Sage, 2006), p. 139.

<sup>105</sup> Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*. p. xv.

<sup>106</sup> 1910 [Cd. 5458] Abstract of labour statistics. Board of Trade (Labour Department). Fourteenth abstract of labour statistics of the United Kingdom.

<sup>107</sup> William Beveridge, *Unemployment, a Problem of Industry* (London: Longmans, 1909), p. 108.

<sup>108</sup> 1909 [Cd. 4632] Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX. Report by Mr. Cyril Jackson on boy labour together with a memorandum from the General Post Office on the conditions of employment of telegraph messengers.

<sup>109</sup> Richard Tawney, ‘The Economics of Boy Labour,’ *The Economic Journal*, 19:76 (1909), pp. 517-537

<sup>110</sup> To understand the activities of the Women’s Industrial Council to enhance the economic position of industrial women through trade training, see: Joyce Goodman, ‘Social investigation and economic empowerment: Trade Schools for Girls, 1892–1914,’ *History of Education*, 27:3 (1998), pp. 297-314.

<sup>111</sup> Clementina Black, ‘Trade Schools for Girls in London.’ *The Economic Journal*, 16:63 (1906), pp. 449-454.

and surveying topics including street trading, blind-alley employment and the decline of apprenticeships, it dealt mainly with boy labour with only a 'short section dealing with girls.'<sup>112</sup> In a similar vein Arthur Greenwood's 1912 essay on blind-alley employment begins by referencing boy and girl labour but subsequently concentrates almost exclusively on boy work, as indicted by his observation that, 'improved conditions of work alone will not give industrial value to the blind-alley boy.'<sup>113</sup> Where relevant, however, reference is made in this study to women and girls.<sup>114</sup>

The definitions used in this thesis for males between twelve and nineteen years old, in general repeat the ways in which contemporary observers referred to them. There are, however, variations to differentiate between ages when identifying a specific grouping within the totality. Those under fourteen are generally 'boys,' while those aged fourteen or over are 'adolescent.'<sup>115</sup> Where the complete group of twelve to nineteen is being described, contemporary terms of 'youth' or 'juvenile' are used.

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<sup>112</sup> Norman Dearle, *The Economic Journal*, 19:76 (1909), p. 565.

<sup>113</sup> Arthur Greenwood, 'Blind-Alley Labour,' *The Economic Journal*, 22:86 (1912), pp. 309-314.

<sup>114</sup> Later, more detailed analysis of women's employment began to appear as for example: The Women's Group Executive, *The War: women: and unemployment*, Fabian Tract; 178.1915. This dealt with 'Unemployment Among Women Wage Earners and How To Deal With it,' and 'Women and the Control of Industry and Supply.' Although the 'war' is in the title the study is much broader, providing a wide-ranging assessment of women's employment. While specifically concerned with *all* women there are interesting references to girls, their entry to employment and training. For recent understanding of women's employment: Nicola Verdon, 'Agricultural Labour and the Contested Nature of Women's Work in Interwar England and Wales,' *The Historical Journal*, 52:1 (2009), 109-130; Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Selina Todd, 'Young women, work and family in inter-war rural England,' *The Agricultural History Review*, 52:1 (2004), pp. 83-98.

<sup>115</sup> The term adolescent was rarely used in works by Edwardian commentators on employment. Arthur Greenwood in *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care*, uses 'juvenile' and only sparingly refers to adolescents, as for example, 'adolescent hooliganism,' p. 71 and 'adolescent careers,' p. 75. The word was used by some writers on education, particularly when referring to secondary school pupils, usually defined as those above the age of fourteen, for example: Michael Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1907), pp. xii, pp. 393-395. Carolyn Oldfield's thesis focuses on women but has practical analysis of both men and women adolescence describing it as, 'a stage of development, and adolescents as a group whose behaviour needs to be managed.' See Carolyn Oldfield, *Growing up Good? Medical, Social Hygiene and Youth Work Perspectives on Young Women, 1918-1939* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2001), pp. 49-62 (p. 60).

## Primary Sources

### *Books, pamphlets and specialist periodicals*

A wide range of primary sources has been drawn on for this thesis, including books by contemporary authors who were expert in the fields of education and employment. The catalogue of the Westminster publisher P.S. King, who marketed a named series on the boy labour question, reflected the growing interest in education, adolescent behaviour and employment. Authors well known for their contribution to both education and employment debates, included Keeling, Bray, Freeman, Greenwood and Dearle, all referenced in this thesis.<sup>116</sup> The study uses texts and tracts by individuals and organisations, including members of the Fabian Society like Sydney Webb and Beatrice Webb, the writer on social and employment reform Frederic Keeling, and the theorist and exponent of socialism Richard Tawney.<sup>117</sup> Tawney's essays and lectures on the employment of boy labour provide constructive insight, specifically his 1934 Sydney Ball Lecture on Juvenile Employment and Education, and The Webb Memorial Lecture of 1952.<sup>118</sup> Other notable authors include Edward Urwick, Charles Russell, Jocelyn Dunlop, John Gorst, and William Beveridge.<sup>119</sup> Contemporary journals that published articles pertinent to education and/or employment, included *The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* and *The Economic Journal*,<sup>120</sup> the latter being a publisher of many articles by recognised employment and social commentators.<sup>121</sup> The

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<sup>116</sup> For listings of many primary sources: G.S. Bain and G.B. Woolven, *A Bibliography of British Industrial Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). In particular, for education and employment of youth, pp. 381-387.

<sup>117</sup> The Fabian Society archive is an important part of the LSE's heritage; co-founders of the LSE Sidney Webb, Beatrice Webb and George Bernard Shaw, were also early and influential members of the Fabian Society which was involved with developing political ideas and public policy on the left.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Tawney, 'The Webbs in Perspective,' *The Webb Memorial Lecture, 1952* (University of London: Athlone press, 1953), and 'Juvenile Employment and Education,' *Sydney Ball Lecture, 1934* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

<sup>119</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities*. Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*. Russell, *Working Lad's Clubs*. Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour*. Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*. Gorst, *The Children of the Nation* (London: Methuen, 1906), Beveridge, *Unemployment* (London: Longmans, 1909).

<sup>120</sup> John Watson, 'Reformatory and Industrial Schools,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 59:2 (1896), pp. 255-317.

<sup>121</sup> Including: Arthur Greenwood, 'Blind-alley Labour' *The Economic Journal*, 22:86 (1912), pp. 309-314; Richard Tawney, 'The Economics of Boy Labour,' *The Economic Journal*, 19:7 (1909), pp. 517-537; Norman

*Eugenics Review* (from 1909) was the official publication of the Eugenics Society formed in 1907, and is particularly relevant to this study's Chapter 2 concerning the perceived degeneration of young people.<sup>122</sup> Journals published abroad like the *Monthly Labor Review* from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, providing analysis of the British labour market in the early 1900s, have also been referenced.<sup>123</sup> Pamphlets published as part of the Fabian Tracts series, from the London School of Economics Digital Library, provide awareness of socialist thinking in both education and employment, particularly those from 1902–1939.<sup>124</sup> The TUC Library Collections, held at the London Metropolitan University and the digitised annual TUC reports, also provide insight into organised labour's attitudes to the employment of juveniles and their concerns about improving education and training.

#### *Records of local government, county and urban, and government papers*

Government papers, including committee reports, royal commissions and legislation, accessed through the National Archives at Kew, the British Library and by means of the digitised House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, document the discussions behind reform and formal structures that were ultimately established. In addition, the library at the London School of Economics provides valuable material relating to youthful employment.<sup>125</sup> Independent reports

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Dearle, journal review of 'Boy and Girl Labour by N. Adler, Richard Tawney' *The Economic Journal*, 19:76 (1909), p. 565; C. Black, 'Trade Schools for Girls in London.' *The Economic Journal*, 16:63 (1906), pp. 449-454.

<sup>122</sup> The novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, by Robert Tressell, talks of the young working-class as, 'directly they were fourteen they left school altogether and went to work all the day. When they were old enough some of them tried to join the Army or Navy, but were found physically unfit. It is not much to be wondered at that when they became a little older they were so degenerate intellectually that they imagined that the surest way to obtain better conditions would be to elect gangs of Liberal and Tory land-grabbers, sweaters, swindlers and lawyers to rule over them.' Manuscript at, *TUC History Online*, p. 1622.

<sup>123</sup> Child Labor, *Monthly Labor review*, 8:3 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor 1919), pp. 217-222, and 4:6 (1917).

<sup>124</sup> Of particular value to this thesis: Hylton Dale, *Child labor under capitalism* (1908), tract 140; G.T.Garratt, *Agriculture and the Labour Party* (1929), tract 228, and Sydney Webb, *The Education Act, 1902 : how to make the best of it* (1903), tract 114.

<sup>125</sup> For example: Bishop of Birmingham Committee, *Report into Street Trading 1910* (LSE: HD6/155), R. S. Searle, *Report on Birmingham Trades. Engineering and Allied Trades. Prepared for use in connexion with the Juvenile Employment Exchange. Prepared on behalf of the Board of Trade* (London: HMSO, 1916.), Child Labour Committee/3/138, notes; reference wage earning children. October 1902, Child Labour Committee/1/2, byelaws of Birmingham, Plymouth, Devonport and Exeter.

including Marjorie Wise's account of education in Devon, from the Devon Archives in Exeter<sup>126</sup> on behalf of the Dartington Hall trustees,<sup>127</sup> and Samuel Pope's report into the Devon byelaws for the employment of children, are valuable sources of information relating to education and early-age employment in the county.<sup>128</sup> In the same way, R. S. Searle's report on Birmingham's engineering and allied trades<sup>129</sup> and the Bishop of Birmingham's report into street trading imparted insight into urban Edwardian employment.<sup>130</sup> The Library of Birmingham's archives also has information on education, employment and court records. The Plymouth and West Devon Record Office holds material on youthful education and employment in the city, including its classified lists of placings by the education authority's juvenile employment bureau.<sup>131</sup> Finally, the Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, hold documents including the Wise reports, minutes of the Torquay education authority meetings concerning local employment bureaux, juvenile post-war employment and education statistics.

### *Newspapers*

'Newspapers played a central role in the political, economic and cultural life of twentieth-century Britain,' but until recently historians were often constrained by trawling through often

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<sup>126</sup> Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, T/AE/2/B.

<sup>127</sup> The Dartington estate was bought by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst in 1925 and a trust established to, among other things, establish experimental educational projects. An example being the founding of Dartington Hall School. Marjorie Wise's report was part of the organisation of a rural teacher training department at Dartington,. These visits, describing Devon schools, were reported fully in her book, *English Village Schools* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931).

<sup>128</sup> 1913 [Cd. 6988] Employment of Children Act, 1903. Report to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department on the byelaw made by the Devon County Council under the Employment of Children Act, 1903, and on the objections thereto. By Samuel Pope, barrister-at-law.

<sup>129</sup> R. S. Searle, *Report on Birmingham Trades. Engineering and Allied Trades. Prepared for use in connexion with the Juvenile Employment Exchange. Prepared on behalf of the Board of Trade*. (London: HMSO, 1916).

<sup>130</sup> Bishop of Birmingham Committee, *Report into Street Trading 1910* (LSE: HD6/155). Charles Gore, campaigner for educational and economic improvement for the working class, was the first Bishop of Birmingham (1905). Latterly, when Bishop of Oxford, he gave annual lectures to the Workers' Educational Association in Reading. Alan Wilkinson, "Gore, Charles (1853-1932), Bishop of Oxford." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>131</sup> For example: 'Report of the Juvenile Sub-Committee for year ended 31 July 1927,' PWDRO: 3642/643.

un-categorized and fragile copies.<sup>132</sup> Increasing digitisation has opened the door to more rigorous use, allowing historians to access a wide range of national, regional and local papers to identify relevant content. This includes regional and local reaction to parliamentary debate and legislation, or simply to understand issues important to one area. This thesis has used coverage of the period by *The Times* and *Manchester Guardian* digital archives, and the British Library's British Newspapers Archive. Several words and phrases were in common parlance, so searching for, for example, 'boy work,' 'blind-alley' or 'apprenticeship' in any newspaper database produces relevant results.<sup>133</sup> The most common regional and local press coverage was either of national issues,<sup>134</sup> or specific local matters.<sup>135</sup> In addition, correspondence to both local and national papers is often illuminating and several letters have been referred to in this thesis.<sup>136</sup>

Care has been taken to recognise the editorial leanings of papers, as for example in the debate over the controversial 1902 Education Act. In Devon, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* which enjoyed the support of the gentry and clergy, and favoured mainly agricultural interests and the established church, encouraged the view that opposition to the Education Act was 'entirely political and sectarian.'<sup>137</sup> The *Western Times*, whose proprietors felt that the county wanted a 'free and independent Press in which liberal principles might be boldly and fearlessly avowed and advocated,' fostered the notion that, 'a general election is imminent, and every

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<sup>132</sup> Adrian Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians' *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:2 (2010), pp. 225-231 (p. 230).

<sup>133</sup> For example, from 1911 in Birmingham and Devon, a search for 'blind alley' produced articles which addressed the issue: 'Juvenile Labour: Mr Runciman and Blind Alley Employment,' *Birmingham Mail*, 11 July 1911, p. 5 and, 'Plymouth Children: First Year's Work of Juvenile Advisory Committee,' *Western Morning News*, 18 December 1911, p. 4. In a similar vein, 'apprenticeship' produces: 'Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment,' *Western Times*, 20 March 1909, p. 2, and 'The system of Apprenticeship is not in vogue,' *Coventry Herald*, 31 October 1902, p. 5.

<sup>134</sup> For example, comment regarding Trade Union restrictions on the number of apprentices employed in specific industries; 'The Apprenticeship System,' *Leamington Spa Courier*, 31 March 1905, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> An example of local comment being the proposition that apprenticeship was no longer relevant to most industries in Birmingham; 'Apprenticeship Question,' *Birmingham Mail*, 26 November 1918, p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> For example, a letter from Nettie Adler, Cyril Jackson, Ramsay McDonald and others; 'Boy Labour and Unemployment,' *The Times*, 14 December 1908, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14 July 1905.

liberal vote means a nail in the coffin of the Education Act.’<sup>138</sup> In a similar vein the opinions expressed nationally by the labour-supporting *Daily Herald* and the establishment-leaning *The Times* were usually divergent across most political and social issues.<sup>139</sup>

John Gorst, politician and social reformer described in 1899 how a boy got up between 3.00 a.m. and 4.00 a.m. every morning in order to wake twenty-five working men. From 5.30 a.m. he worked as a newspaper delivery boy until 9.00 a.m. when it was time for school where he was usually found half asleep.<sup>140</sup> In 1901 the headmaster of the elementary school in South Brent, Devon, said that the low attendance rate among the 103 registered boys was a result of them ‘working on farms.’<sup>141</sup> The percentage of juveniles aged between fourteen and sixteen enrolled in public sector schools and colleges in 1913 was only 5.8 per cent, but by 1930 it was 17.8 per cent, and in 1938, 19.6 per cent.<sup>142</sup> Within this thirty-year period, the street-selling boy and the pre-adolescent farm worker disappeared as a result of policy initiatives including the introduction of local byelaws limiting juvenile employment, and the establishment of compulsory education to the age of fourteen. The aim of this thesis is to follow the route taken by boys from education to employment across the first three decades of the twentieth century, and to understand the ideas, arguments and policies that led to the changes outlined above.

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<sup>138</sup> *Western Times*, 6 January 1905.

<sup>139</sup> The *Daily Herald* was founded as a socialist daily newspaper and published in London between 1912 and 1964. It was initially a strike bulletin for the London Society of Compositors (printers) and its editorial policy was clearly demonstrated thus; ‘men and women will not be judged by their banking accounts, but by their characters and their usefulness to the community, and labour from being the despised, shall be the esteemed of all.’ ‘Where we stand,’ *Daily Herald*, 6 February 1911, p. 1. In using the same search term of ‘boy labour’ *The Times*’ different approach is seen in this editorial: ‘The skilled Trade Unions must step down off their pedestal ... working men generally must learn to recognise that their wealth lies less in a high wage than in a regular wage.’ ‘The Poor Law Commission and Casual Labour,’ *The Times* 23 March 1909, p. 19.

<sup>140</sup> Gorst, *The Children of the Nation*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>141</sup> *Totnes Weekly Times*, 23 November 1901, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> Education: Historical statistics, *House of Commons Library*, November 2012, p. 18.

## Chapter 1: Society, Philanthropy and Managing Boys

Historians have argued that late Victorian and Edwardian society faced uncharted challenges due to the changing industrial structures of the United Kingdom and the expanding populations of towns and cities. These claims are considered in subsequent chapters. In particular, consideration is focused on how social changes affected the education and employment of boys and young men; as John Davis posits, ‘what youth was doing and what to do with youth.’<sup>1</sup> There will be emphasis on the effects of the First World War and what links there were between Edwardian society and that of the 1920s as the challenges for delivering a more coordinated approach to education arose, and of mitigating the impact of blind-alley employment. The specifics of education and employment for boys aged between twelve and nineteen are covered in later chapters but these topics did not sit in isolation. There was an interrelationship between education and employment on the one hand and on the other a range of disparate issues, including crime, leisure, and the growing influence of both the local and national state. As Harry Hendrick points out, early twentieth-century observers in contemplating the boy labour problem included social considerations because work and social life were inseparable.<sup>2</sup> This chapter provides a foundation for later chapters by examining some of the social issues emerging in late Victorian and Edwardian society, particularly as they played a part in the development of youth.<sup>3</sup> For this purpose, issues have been identified as the role of philanthropy, the emergence and impact of boys clubs and organisations, crime as identified as a juvenile problem, and the promotion of youthful emigration as a tool for resolving the dilemma of urban overcrowding.

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<sup>1</sup> John Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain, Images of Adolescent Conflict*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Adrienne Gavin and Adrian Humphries describe Edwardian childhood as, ‘a subject of deep concern, fascination, and even obsession.’ They provide a wide-ranging insight into the concept, role and portrayal of childhood in Edwardian Britain, *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction*, eds., Adrienne Gavin and Adrian Humphries (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p.1.



## Early Twentieth Century Britain

Peter Hennock described the Edwardian years as reflecting a change in perception as challenges both militarily, following poor performances in the Boer war, and economic as America and Germany in particular competed aggressively with Britain's manufacturing output. This highlighted the need to address national efficiency and resources.<sup>4</sup> There was also growing middle-class concern over rapid population growth and urbanisation, with the ostensive threat of juvenile delinquency.

From the late-Victorian era there was wide ranging debate about whether society was threatened from below, in part through fear of the growing influence of the working class as the franchise expanded. Charles Russell, a key figure in the boys' club movement and author on subjects affecting young people, referred to the rapidly growing population, up from six million at the turn of the 18th century to thirty million in 1890, and wrote of the increasing alienation of classes, the growing slums and the emerging 'evils' of these developments.<sup>5</sup> He maintained that 'ruffianism of youth' had become 'an absolute danger to the community.'<sup>6</sup> More recently historians have described a rising level of social anxiety over delinquency which remained elevated until after the First World War,<sup>7</sup> and how 'youth movements from the 1890s onwards, contributed to the increase in anxiety over delinquency.'<sup>8</sup> As Hendrick observes, 'the clarity of the perception of youth as a problem sharpened.'<sup>9</sup> Contemporary observers expressed concern about the enfranchisement of many working-class males in the 1867 Reform Act, particularly in the confusion about how the Act should be interpreted.<sup>10</sup> In 1873, for example,

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Hennock, 'The measurement of urban poverty: from the metropolis to the nation, 1880-1920,' *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. XL, 2 (1987), pp. 208-227 (p.214).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Russell, *Working Lads' Clubs* (London: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 5,10.

<sup>6</sup> Russell, *Working Lads' Clubs*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain*, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 252.

<sup>10</sup> For perspective on a significant piece of legislation in nineteenth-century Britain, see C. Hall, K. McClelland and J. Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

it was ruled that the rent paid to absent landlords included the payment of rates which had the effect of expanding the franchise to incorporate the occupiers of many slum tenements.<sup>11</sup> The subsequent Parliamentary and Municipal Registration Act of 1878 further cemented the extension of the vote by allowing the inclusion of tenants from any part of a house that was separately occupied, effectively meaning that if rent and rates were paid, occupation of a single room was qualification to vote. As a result there was a rise in adult male voter eligibility from 1,364,000 in 1866 to 5,708,000 in 1885.<sup>12</sup> Many of the upper and middle-classes saw this as a potential threat through the influence of the 'residuum' at the ballot box rather than from riot or revolution even though in reality, the impact of the very poor on democracy was not really felt until much later in the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

Strong anti-authoritarian attitudes were identified within the working class by middle-class commentators. The *South London Chronicle* reported in 1898 how, when a policeman tried to apprehend two men for disorderly behaviour, a hostile crowd emerged to frustrate the police shouting out, to 'boot 'em.'<sup>14</sup> In the same issue there was a report of police having to draw batons to fight their way out of a crowd when arresting two men. Edward Urwick also observed that in some circumstances gangs of youths would attack the police, although at the same time he talked of 'the average man' being oversensitive to social dangers and social suffering.<sup>15</sup> There appeared, therefore, to be an element of public panic created by exaggerated fears of hooliganism. While acknowledging the popular sentiment that the population of towns was rapidly 'going to the bad,' Urwick proposed that although gangs of hooligans existed in some slum areas of towns and cities they were merely replicating activity of previous centuries

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<sup>11</sup> José Harris, 'Between civic virtue and Social Darwinism,' in *Retrieved Riches. Social Investigation in Britain 1840-1914*, eds. David Englander and Rosemary O'Day (Aldershot: Scholar, 1995), pp. 76-77.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Salmon and Kathryn Rix, 'Who should have the vote?' *History Today*, 6-8-18, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, 'Between civic virtue and Social Darwinism,' p. 76.

<sup>14</sup> 'Boot 'em at Waterloo,' *South London Chronicle*, 15 October 1898, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities*, p. 301.

and it was a mistake to think the trend was increasing.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Stephen Humphries has noted that ‘hooliganism was a constant cause for concern,’<sup>17</sup> and the press was still reflecting these worries, as for example the *Daily Herald* which referred in 1912 to armed gangs of hooligan youths who ‘infested’ the East End of London.<sup>18</sup> Paul Thompson suggests part of the increased concern was because the middle-aged were jealous of young adults for their freedom and were frightened of the independent youth culture that they saw on the streets.<sup>19</sup> More generally, Pat Thane points to the liberal economy of the later Victorian period failing to create a method of more fairly distributing the proceeds of economic growth and that, ‘the philanthropically inclined in all social groups expressed disturbance at the material and moral condition of a substantial majority of the population who were not sharing in the general rise in living standards.’<sup>20</sup>

Social investigation was an accepted way for the British to measure and understand the poor and their conditions.<sup>21</sup> But David Englander and Rosemary O’Day have advocated there was a change in the late nineteenth century for resolving social problems, away from earlier links between observational research and solutions towards the rise of practical improvement. They point to the foundation of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS) which coordinated the activities of those involved in social research to lobby MPs for legislation to achieve it.<sup>22</sup> The NAPSS in itself highlighted the differences about how the poor should be assisted by supporting the philosophies of bodies like the Charity Organisation Society (COS) with its emphasis on individual responsibility, rather than the collective

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<sup>16</sup> Urwick. *Studies of Boy Life*, pp. 256-258.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup> ‘East End Ire,’ *Daily Herald*, 29 April 1912, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians*, (St Albans: Paladin, 1975), p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Pat Thane, ‘Government and Society in England and Wales, 1790-1914,’ in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, 3, ed., Francis Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> The work of Charles Booth, Henry Mayhew, Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree and others are widely analysed elsewhere, for example in essays included in, *Retrieved Riches. Social Investigation in Britain 1840-1914*, eds., David Englander and Rosemary O’Day (Aldershot: Scholar, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Englander and O’Day, *Retrieved Riches*, p. 11.

approach which coloured the attitudes of many late-Victorian and Edwardian social investigators, and which directed Fabian thinking.<sup>23</sup> The COS, the Fabians and others are more fully considered later in this chapter.

Reflecting on the emerging theories about how to measure and resolve the challenges of urbanisation and an industrial society, José Harris describes the period between 1890 and 1914 as,

a classic age of social policy debate in Britain. It was a period in which social problems were given unusual prominence in the wider study of ethics, economics, science and political thought ... For perhaps the only time in its history social policy was central rather than marginal to the most powerful currents of British intellectual life.<sup>24</sup>

Some commentators believe that something of a dynamic, socialist surge of reforming zeal in the late Victorian period was subsequently replaced by more considered middle-class rationalism. But many of those advocating and agitating for social improvement straddled both the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and Bernard and Helen Bosanquet are examples, all being active in the later decades of the nineteenth century and also influential in the twentieth, not least through Beatrice Bosanquet's and Helen Webb's opposing but influential positions on the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws.<sup>25</sup> Middle-class reformers of Edwardian Britain might not have provided the same fire and brimstone zeal as their mid-Victorian counterparts, but this was as much a result of changing industrial and social dynamics as a reflection of the character of those who came later. As Arnold Freeman noted in

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<sup>23</sup> Englander and O'Day, *Retrieved Riches*, p.12

<sup>24</sup> José Harris, 'The Webbs, The Charity Organisation Society and the Ratan Tata Foundation: Social policy from the perspective of 1912,' in *The Goals of Social Policy*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Helen Bosanquet was instrumental in drafting the majority report while Beatrice and Sydney Webb were drivers behind the minority report. Social reformer and author C.S. Loch proposed that, 'the paramount difference between the two reports, I think, is this. The Majority is primarily a report on the reform of administration. The Minority is primarily a memoir on the reorganisation of society on a state-supported basis. In the former the responsibility of maintenance depends on the individual. In the latter it is transferred to the state.' Charles Loch, 'Eugenics and the Poor Law,' *Eugenics Review*, 1910 November; 2:3, pp. 229-232.

1914, much reform is evolutionary, building on what has gone before and reflecting the changing social environment.<sup>26</sup> The emerging trade union movement was an example of evolving society and it has been claimed that the unions, through organisational strength, were able to advance and protect working-class interests in a way that previously had not been possible.<sup>27</sup> Regarding juvenile labour, the union movement increasingly lobbied for their welfare, as for example the resolution tabled in 1910 by the Watermen and Lightermen of the river Thames when instructing the TUC congress to ‘make representation to the Government with a view to reducing the excessive number of hours being worked by lads under the age of eighteen.’<sup>28</sup> More recently historians have cautioned about assigning too much influence to the unions, suggesting that from the turn of the twentieth century through to the 1920s, they were only strong in traditional mining areas and were few in number and generally without influence in the midlands and south east.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, from the 1880s and throughout the Edwardian period, the Board of Trade annually reported on the level and distribution of unionisation British industry. They were keen to extoll the conciliatory role of unionism and to deflate ideas that it was primarily interested in fomenting industrial disputes. Furthermore, the board also saw the unions as playing an important role in industrial relations through their own arbitration and conciliation services.<sup>30</sup> Their potential to provide accident, sickness and unemployment insurance was acknowledged, with figures from 1908 showing that over sixty per cent of union members belonged to a union offering unemployment benefit and around

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<sup>26</sup> Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour. The Manufacture of Inefficiency* (Westminster: P.S. King, 1914), p. 231.

<sup>27</sup> William A. Pelz, ‘The Rise of the Working Classes: Trade Unions and Socialism, 1871-1914.’ *A People's History of Modern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 2016), pp. 83-102.

<sup>28</sup> TUC Annual Report 1910, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Duncan Tanner, ‘The Politics of the Labour Movement, 1900-1939,’ in *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed., Chris Wrigley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Roger Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 134.

forty per cent were members of those which provided accident or accident and sickness benefits.<sup>31</sup>

## **Philanthropy**

As well as formalised bodies like the unions, individual philanthropists and philanthropic organisations also became more conspicuous from the mid-Victorian period, with the effect that philanthropy and statutory bodies often began working together, eventually effecting a transformation of nineteenth-century philanthropy into twentieth-century social services. Robert Snape has described organised voluntary action as ‘an important source of energy within civil society.’<sup>32</sup> But contemporary comment was sometimes less than complimentary about the role of philanthropists. In a letter to *The Times* an Independent Labour Party MP warned of the hidden agenda that he saw behind philanthropic work which he described as ugly, supporting ‘wealth, luxury, tyranny and despotism.’<sup>33</sup>

Much of the work done in youth support in the 1880s was philanthropic but by the 1900s it was increasingly the responsibility of bodies like local education authorities, juvenile employment committees and after-care committees.<sup>34</sup> These bodies had to work with the voluntary sector and often relied on their time and expertise. Hendrick points out, in youth policy the philanthropic tradition increasingly was incorporated into an emerging social service state.<sup>35</sup> The need for this kind of co-operation is visible in a report from the warden of the university settlement in Bermondsey. He wrote that:

It becomes more than ever important to secure cooperation between public authorities and bodies of well-equipped voluntary workers. In the poorer districts, such agencies

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<sup>31</sup> For statistics relating to welfare related benefits and expenditure by trade unions on benefits between 1907 and 1914: Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 85-86.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Snape, *Leisure, Voluntary Action and Social Change in Britain, 1880-1939* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Independent Labour Party,’ *The Times*, 20 April 1908, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, pp. 179,180.

<sup>35</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, pp. 180,181.

as Settlements are absolutely necessary if such voluntary cooperation is to be forthcoming ... the Public Health, Education and Poor Law Authorities need the assistance of such workers, if their best schemes are to succeed and if Acts of Parliament which affect the condition of the people are to be made affective ... all such work, while distinctly civic in its nature, cannot possibly be provided by either the State or political parties.<sup>36</sup>

The majority report from the 1909 Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Relief of Distress acknowledged this, noting that the causes of poverty and distress could not be resolved by government alone and that it needed support from the community at large, in particular from the well to do and economically secure.<sup>37</sup> It acknowledged the strong voluntary ethos in Britain but suggested it needed to be disciplined and well led. The report accepted that the new administrative initiatives it proposed would conflict with many old traditions but to reform the social life of the country it was imperative they be made.<sup>38</sup>

One of the earliest voluntary bodies was the Charity Organisation Society (COS). Formed in 1869 its objectives were described by one of its leading members, Octavia Hill the English social reformer, as coordinating the activity of ‘charitable agencies of a district,’ and extending help to the poor.<sup>39</sup> The COS espoused the benefits of voluntarism and the free market<sup>40</sup> and argued that state intervention through provision of out of work relief would lead to a ‘demoralization of the working classes.’<sup>41</sup> Hill said, ‘we must not help too much, or he becomes dependent,’ a position echoed by fellow member, Helen Bosanquet.<sup>42</sup> The COS was a strong supporter of orthodox economics<sup>43</sup> and its emphasis on personal responsibility was reflective

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<sup>36</sup> Percy Ashley, University Settlements in Great Britain, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 4:2 (1911), pp. 175-203.

<sup>37</sup> Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, The Majority Report, 1909. [Cd 4499] pp. 643-644.

<sup>38</sup> Royal Commission on Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909, pp. 643-644.

<sup>39</sup> Octavia Hill, “The Charity Organisation Society.” *Charity Organisation Review*, 39:231 (1916), pp. 136-138.

<sup>40</sup> José Harris, *Goals of Social Policy*, p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> A.M. McBriar, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles. The Bosanquets versus the Webbs. A Study in British Social Policy 1890-1929* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> McBriar, *An Edwardian Mixed Doubles*, p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> José Harris, ‘Bosanquet, Helen (1860-1925),’ rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. < <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37208> > [accessed 11 Sept 2017].

of established Victorian values.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately this became a weakness as it saw only individual causes and not the wider challenges to the whole social structure as rapid urbanisation, population growth and unemployment took hold at the turn of the century.<sup>45</sup> While the COS was strongly rooted in the south of England, in the north its equivalents were the Guilds of Help which Michael Moore describes as subscribing to the COS principles but with the significant difference that they encouraged state assistance programmes.<sup>46</sup> Both the Guilds and the COS have been portrayed as representing middle-class attempts to push back against the rise of socialism and also to represent the beginning of a movement away from charity towards more formally established social work.<sup>47</sup>

If the COS and the Guilds espoused the virtues of self-help with minimal state support, the Fabian Society characterised a form of collectivism which used the educated classes to pursue reform for the working-class; something described as enlightened paternalism.<sup>48</sup> Fabians believed that capitalism had created an unjust and inefficient society and in the period before the First World War, they were critical of the COS and its perceived rigidity in failing to recognise a growing role for the state. These divergent views were broadly represented in the two reports of the 1909 Royal Commission, ideas as already described as being greatly influenced by Helen Bosanquet of the COS, and Beatrice Webb of the Fabians. Both reports recognised the value of the voluntary sector, but the majority report in broad terms favoured

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<sup>44</sup> Robert Pinker, 'Social work and social policy in the twentieth century: retrospect and prospect,' in *The Goals of Social Policy*, p. 87.

<sup>45</sup> Pinker, 'Social work and social policy in the twentieth century,' p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> Michael J. Moore, 'Social Service and Social Legislation in Edwardian England: The Beginning of a New Role for Philanthropy,' *Albion*, 3:1 (1971), pp. 33-43.

<sup>47</sup> Keith Laybourn, 'The Guild of Help and the changing face of Edwardian philanthropy,' *Urban History*, 20:1 (1993), pp. 43-60.

<sup>48</sup> Remesh Mishra, 'The academic tradition in social policy: The Titmuss years,' in *The Goals of Social Policy*, p. 65.



an independent voluntary sector with possible funding from the central state, while the minority report had the voluntary sector firmly placed under local authority control.<sup>49</sup>

The university and social settlement movement represented one voluntary initiative.<sup>50</sup> Their involvement with youth and boys' clubs, is touched upon below but in broad terms settlement objectives have been described as providing for the scientific study of poverty, delivering education to a wider district and offering leadership to the local community.<sup>51</sup> More succinctly Samuel and Henrietta founders of Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel in 1884 described it as being, 'a clubhouse in Whitechapel occupied by men who do citizen's duty in the neighbourhood.'<sup>52</sup> In the 1890s there were middle and upper-class fears that the destitute might one day grow in size to a degree that it rendered 'the continuance of our existent social system impossible,' and that society would benefit from educated young men working with the masses to essentially protect the status quo.<sup>53</sup> But while the settlements were clearly middle class, those who ran them denied patronising or condescending attitudes towards those they helped.<sup>54</sup> By 1926 there were fifty-six settlements in Britain with the concept expanding rapidly across the United States. In Devon there were establishments in Exeter, Teignmouth and Plymouth. At the end of the nineteenth century settlements were generally viewed as being a success, although the wide range of activities undertaken by individual settlements meant there was no

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<sup>49</sup> An analysis of voluntary and state sector social services in this period can be read in: Jane Lewis, 'The Boundary Between Voluntary and Statutory Social Service in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries' *The Historical Journal*, 39:1 (1996), pp. 155-177.

<sup>50</sup> For details of the role of university settlements as viewed early in the twentieth century see; Percy Ashley, 'University Settlements in Great Britain,' *The Harvard Theological Review*, 4:2 (1911), pp. 175-203.

<sup>51</sup> Mark. K. Smith, 'University and social settlements, and social action centres', *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*. 2000. <[infed.org/mobi/toynbee-hall-adult-education-and-association/](http://infed.org/mobi/toynbee-hall-adult-education-and-association/)> [accessed 17 June 2019].

<sup>52</sup> Ashley, 'University Settlements in Great Britain,' p. 178. Early residents who were active in social welfare included the public school and university educated: Sir Cyril Jackson, Charterhouse and Oxford, involved in social work at Toynbee Hall between 1893-1903 and who chaired the report on boy labour in the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. William Braithwaite, Winchester and Oxford who was a resident between 1898-1903 and played a leading role in introducing the national health insurance scheme that was part of the National Insurance Act of 1911. He was a close friend of William Beveridge, Charterhouse and Oxford, who became sub-warden of the settlement. Richard Tawney, Rugby and Oxford, later Beveridge's brother-in-law, was resident for three years. Clement Attlee, Haileybury and Oxford was secretary of the hall in 1909.

<sup>53</sup> John Gorst, 'Settlements in England and America,' in *The Universities and the Social Problem*, ed., John M Knott (London: Rivington, 1895), p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Gorst, 'Settlements in England and America,' p. 154.

certain standard by which performance could realistically be measured.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, reformer and politician Sir John Gorst referring to, ‘a class of lads and young men ... to whom the name “Hooligan” has been lately given,’ wrote that, ‘the University Settlements have succeeded in taming and civilising some of them.’<sup>56</sup> While initially situated in the poorer parts of cities some reformers saw a place for them in rural locations. At a meeting in 1894 of the English Land Colonisation Society whose aim was to obtain small parcels of land for cultivation by poorer agricultural workers,<sup>57</sup> a proposal was made to establish ‘rural university settlements’ with a motive being to help stem the flow of rural workers to the towns and cities.<sup>58</sup>

### **Boys clubs and organisations**

As already noted, there was concern in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain about the group of adolescents<sup>59</sup> that Sir John Gorst described as hooligans and the need to control what was seen as the emotional volatility and aggression of working-class boys.<sup>60</sup> The boys’ club movement emerged in the late nineteenth century in an attempt to provide for an improvement in boys’ lives, endeavouring to mirror many of the structures and benefits that were offered by the public schools and universities. Some clubs were affiliated to leading public schools with Harrow School, Repton School, and Eton College among the early pioneers. Rugby School was one of the first to open a club outside London with their establishment in Birmingham. Subsequently others including Winchester, Marlborough, Clifton, Haileybury, Shrewsbury, Wellington and Charterhouse opened missions with, what has been described as, ‘an

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<sup>55</sup> Ashley, ‘University Settlements in Great Britain,’ p. 175.

<sup>56</sup> John Gorst, *The Children of the Nation* (London: Methuen, 1906), p. 214.

<sup>57</sup> Blackwell family. Additional papers of the Blackwell family, 1851-1972 (inclusive), 1851-1935 (bulk), Folder 2.1. Manuscript proposals and printed material re: Home Colonization Society, 1882-1893. n.d. <<http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/46996196> seq. 70>

<sup>58</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 October 1894, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> For a description of the emergence of adolescence, substantially from an American perspective although the analysis is still helpful: John Demos and Virginia Demos, ‘Adolescence in Historical Perspective,’ *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 31:4 (November 1969), pp. 632-638, and Joseph F. Kett, ‘Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America,’ *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2:2 (1971), pp. 283-298.

<sup>60</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 61.

ostentatious display of social conscience and religious conviction.’<sup>61</sup> In addition, Cheltenham Ladies College started the Mayfield House settlement in 1889<sup>62</sup> with an intention to provide old Cheltenham College girls with work experience and seeing different kinds of occupations in the community that, ‘may be useful to them wherever their sphere in the future may be.’<sup>63</sup> Many clubs were associated with university settlements, the first in London being attached to Mansfield House and opening in 1900.<sup>64</sup> Its mission statement was ‘to preserve boyhood’ adding that ‘it was painful to note how soon boys become men.’<sup>65</sup> But its Warden claimed that it should also ‘be a practice ground in the duties of citizenship.’<sup>66</sup> Toynbee introduced one of the first Scout groups in London and the Robert Browning Settlement in Walworth organised boy and girls’ clubs together with country holidays, a holiday school and boy and girl Scout groups.<sup>67</sup>

It was believed by many educationalists and reformers that while gangs were a natural reaction to a lack of social opportunities within the slums, and that the coming together for amusement sometimes led to lawlessness, ‘the real crime of the Hooligan, however, was that he was poor.’<sup>68</sup> Gorst concluded in 1895 that boys’ clubs were successful because they had had a civilizing effect on their members; the rationale being that boys felt a similar ‘esprit de corps’ to boys in public schools and did not misbehave because of a fear of letting down their fellow members.<sup>69</sup> In this context the Bishop of London told how the members of one club reported a

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<sup>61</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 170.

<sup>62</sup> For details of girls’ clubs and activities, and a broad analysis of the club and settlement movements, see: Kate Bradley, ‘Growing up with a City’: Exploring Settlement Youth Work in London and Chicago, c. 1880–1940. *London Journal*, 34:3 (2009), pp. 285-298.

<sup>63</sup> John Knapp, *The Universities and the Social Problem. An Account of the University Settlements in East London* (London: Rivington, 1895), p. 110.

<sup>64</sup> *London Evening Standard*, 16 July 1900, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Men and Matters in the World of Sport,’ *Sporting Life*, 18 July 1900, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> Ashley, ‘University Settlements in Great Britain,’ p. 185.

<sup>67</sup> Roberta J. Park, ‘Boys clubs are better than policemen’s clubs: endeavours by philanthropists, social reformers, and others to prevent juvenile crime, the late 1800s to 1917,’ *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24:6 (2007), pp. 749-775.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Hooliganism in London’ *London Evening Standard*, 5 December 1900, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> John Knapp, *The Universities and the Social Problem*, p. 19.

fellow member for ‘cheeking a copper,’ although the Bishop pondered that in previous times it would not have just been cheek they would have restricted themselves to.<sup>70</sup>

In his often-quoted book *Working Lads’ Clubs*, Charles Russell<sup>71</sup> described the objective of clubs as being to provide poorer lads with the opportunity to enjoy happier and healthier lives than would be achieved from spending their leisure hours ‘in loafing about the streets.’<sup>72</sup> The facilities provided by clubs were described by a visitor to a boy’s club in Battersea in 1906:

a bright building, not very pretentious, rising above an atmosphere heavy with the smell of stale beer and frying fish. I went into the museum to see the children looking at the pictures and cases of butterflies, which the dwellers in those parts but can rarely see on the wing. Then I went into the gymnasium and saw fifty or more fellows happily engaged in gymnastic exercises. Then I was shown the recreation room with its billiard table, bagatelle board, and its “shove-halfpenny” arrangements. This room was well filled and it was abundantly clear that the fellows were enjoying themselves. There were also, I believe, washing baths.<sup>73</sup>

Battersea was close to the ideals set out by social reformer William Braithwaite who wrote that clubs would initially appeal to boys looking to socialise and play games as this was a way to attract them in but ‘education, however properly understood, should be the means of keeping and disciplining them.’<sup>74</sup> He suggested that gymnastics and physical drill were ‘especially valuable,’ although in his wider experience he noted that very few clubs actually provided any form of education, something that made them, ‘worse than useless.’<sup>75</sup> Clubs were generally deemed to be a success, with the structures and objectives of those established by organisations like universities or public schools easy to appraise. But those set up by local

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<sup>70</sup> ‘The Bishop of London On Boys’ Clubs,’ *The Times*, 22 November 1901, p. 6

<sup>71</sup> Russell was later a leading figure in the National Association of Boys’ Clubs.

<sup>72</sup> Charles E. Russell, *Working Lads’ Clubs*, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Morning Post*, 15 October 1906, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> William John Braithwaite, ‘Boys Clubs’ in *Studies of Boy Life in our Cities*, p. 201.

<sup>75</sup> Braithwaite, pp. 202-203 (p. 207).

philanthropists or clergymen, with their longevity varying significantly, were more difficult to evaluate.<sup>76</sup> Michael Childs observes that very little information exists as to the experiences of the boys themselves and the numbers involved were relatively small.<sup>77</sup> Before World War One, only nine per cent of working boys in London, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, belonged to a club and there was often a shortage of both money and volunteers to expand the facilities.<sup>78</sup> And as someone involved observed, it was not only a lack of volunteers and money that restricted the benefits of boys' clubs, but a wider problem:

The apathy of outsiders, the intolerance of genuine but unintelligent piety, the inconsistency of helpers, aims frustrated and hopes disappointed, worst of all the consciousness of duty imperfectly discharged and opportunity let slip.<sup>79</sup>

A scheme was launched in 1909 to encourage membership of organisations including the Boy Scouts, Church Lads', Catholic Boys', Jewish Lads' and the Boys' Life Brigades. This allowed members to apply to the labour exchange with a formal reference from their club. It was hoped employers would see that boys from these organisations demonstrated discipline, strength of character and efficiency.<sup>80</sup>

Following the First World War, there were greater efforts to encourage boys' clubs as indicated by the founding of the National Association of Boys' Clubs (NABC) in 1925. The association was not intended to compete with established groups like the Boys' Brigades and the Scouts, with a founding principle of the association being to cooperate with the larger foundations. Clubs operated by and large, indoors and in the evenings.<sup>81</sup> The association's

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<sup>76</sup> For a comparison between British and German approaches to boys' organisations: John R. Gillis, 'Conformity and Rebellion: Contrasting Styles of English and German Youth, 1900-33,' *History of Education Quarterly*, 13:3 (1973), pp. 249-260.

<sup>77</sup> Michael J. Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 171.

<sup>78</sup> 'The Twentieth Century League. Henry C. Burdett.' *The Times*, 2 April 1904, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> B. P. Neuman, *Boy's Clubs in Theory and Practice* (London: David Nutt, 1900), p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> 'Boys' Associations and Employment.' *The Times*, 30 December 1910, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> 'Notes of the Day,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 March 1929, p. 4.

clubs were usually established in the poorest districts of towns and cities and their mission was defined as providing working lads with recreational interests, education, character and the spiritual, by which was meant the spirit of service.<sup>82</sup> A study by the diocese of Birmingham in early 1914 questioned the effectiveness of the Scouts and Boys' Brigades in inner-city slums, and argued that clubs were better positioned to give specific attention to the needs of individual members because their structures appealed more effectively to the natural social inclinations of young adolescents.<sup>83</sup> At a meeting of the association in 1930, a representative criticised both the Lads' Brigade and the Scouts as using 'make-believe' to cause boys to feel like men and citizens.<sup>84</sup> The Scouts were 'failing to reach the adolescent,' and only 'club boys' became men and citizens.<sup>85</sup> Whether this opinion represented a general antipathy towards the Scouts and Lads, or was the view of one disaffected club is impossible to confirm, although bearing in mind the comments from the Birmingham diocese they were possibly widely held. Academic Arthur Morgan, although writing some nine years later in 1939, expressed similar conclusions about the Scouts' inability to reach older adolescents:

It appeals to the adolescent who has the imagination to see its application to the larger sphere of life and to the one who grows out of boyhood more slowly, for whom the game of make-believe is carried over into maturity. It will hold the under-developed lad and a Baden-Powell or a Robert Louis Stephenson. But the ordinary boy, caught into the machinery of examinations if he is still at school or imbued with an exaggerated sense of his manhood if he is at work, and in any case a little weary after several years of Scouting, wants a change and so he slides out of the movement.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 'Clubs for Boys,' *The Times*, 27 March 1929, p. 11.

<sup>83</sup> 'The Training of a Working Boy,' *Birmingham Mail*, 22 May 1914, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> 'The Boys' Club Movement,' *The Times*, 14 July 1930, p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> *The Times*, 14 July 1930, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Arthur Morgan, 'The Needs of Youth: A Report Made to the King George's Jubilee Trust Fund. 1939.' Quoted in Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 78.

By March 1929, 774 clubs were affiliated to NABC<sup>87</sup> representing about five per cent of the two million working boys aged between fourteen and eighteen.<sup>88</sup> But from the two million, only twenty per cent were supported by any organisation interested in their welfare.<sup>89</sup>

Hendrick also draws attention to an issue that was recognised, though rarely explicitly, as a reason for establishing clubs; specifically to avoid early sexual encounters and marital relationships.<sup>90</sup> Lily Montague, activist in the field of the industrial and social condition of girls, wrote that mixed clubs were unlikely to succeed because girls tended to flirt and saw clubs as places to find a bridegroom.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Scout movement received letters to their *Headquarters' Gazette* describing the Girl Guides as a potent vehicle for controlling female sexuality which was expressed as, 'giggling, shrieking, going arm in arm along the street together and thus attracting the attention of boys.'<sup>92</sup>

Charles Russell considered that the successful running of a boy's club depended on 'men to work it,' but by the First World War and on into the 1920s, the role of women in adolescent supervision became more visible.<sup>93</sup> The Birmingham Settlement ran clubs for boys aged fourteen to eighteen, eighteen to twenty-one and for those over twenty-one, all run predominantly by women.<sup>94</sup> These clubs often provided for difficult boys that other clubs could not handle, because as the female warden of the Birmingham Settlement claimed, 'women were far more patient with the boys ... they could also convey to the boys not only that they hoped for improvement, but they expected it.'<sup>95</sup> During the war, the ability of women to deal with children and young people made the case that with regard to criminal misdemeanours they

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<sup>87</sup> 'National Association of Boys' Clubs,' *The Times*, 7 August 1929, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 March 1929.

<sup>89</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 March 1929.

<sup>90</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 173.

<sup>91</sup> Miss Lily H. Montagu, 'The Girl in the Background,' in Edward John Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in our Cities* (London: J.M. Dent, 1904), pp. 233-254.

<sup>92</sup> Sam Pryke, 'The Boy Scouts and the Girl Question,' *Sexualities* (London: Sage 4:2, 2001), pp. 191-210.

<sup>93</sup> Russell, *Working Lads' Clubs*, p. 69.

<sup>94</sup> 'Women Lead Boys' Cubs,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 1 February 1928, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 1 February 1928, p. 8.

should be used more frequently as assistants to regular probation officers.<sup>96</sup> In the London juvenile courts between 1918 and 1933, only female probation officers were employed.<sup>97</sup> Well before Russell made his comments about the need for male volunteers to run clubs, Montagu noted that ‘much good has been effected in boys’ clubs by the influence of ladies.’<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, they remained a minority presence as middle-class young women were increasingly drawn to running girls’ clubs, the National Organisation of Girls’ Clubs, founded in 1911, predated its male equivalent by fourteen years.<sup>99</sup> And the influence of women was not always welcomed. It has been suggested that one of the missions of the inter-war clubs was to re-establish pre-war visions of masculinity, although Tebbutt highlights the concerns of the National Association of Schoolmasters that the growing influence of women teachers was, ‘undermining manliness and feminising the male body,’ as less physical activities replaced the pre-war emphasis on drill and military training.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> ‘Women as Probation Officers,’ *Western Morning News*, 13 May 1916, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> Edmund C. Rhodes, ‘Juvenile Delinquency,’ *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 102:3 (1939), pp. 384-405 (p. 399).

<sup>98</sup> Montagu, ‘The Girl in the Background,’ p. 252.

<sup>99</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 79. For further reading about girls’ clubs, Iris Dove, *Sisterhood or Surveillance. The Development of Working Girls’ Clubs in London 1880-1939* (PhD, University of Greenwich, 1996).

<sup>100</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 70.



**Figure 1.3.** ‘Drill for boys in London,’ 1912. From, David Reeder, *Urban Education in the 19th Century* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1977).

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries observers described the founding of all clubs (non-denominational and religiously associated organisations) as having ‘a very real and active religious sentiment.’<sup>101</sup> Robert Morris argues that the 1890s was a time in which religious activity in Britain reached its zenith, but submits that this was not manifest in an upsurge of attendances at church, rather by an increase in the number of clubs and associations attached to churches as they expanded into the growing suburbs.<sup>102</sup> Churches were becoming leisure centres and social groups, and in doing so reflected a middle-class aspiration for encouraging the working-classes to attend church. Several national youth organisations had their genesis in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, including the Boys’ Brigade, the Church Lads’ Brigade and the Boy Scouts, the first two being unambiguously religious in their establishment.

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<sup>101</sup> Charles Russell, *Working Lads Clubs*, p. 194.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Morris, ‘Clubs, societies and associations’ in ed., F.M.L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 420.

The Boys' Brigade was founded in Glasgow in 1883 for boys of twelve and over by Sir William Alexander Smith, a religious man from a military background. The Brigade's aim was to encourage Christian virtues through religious education, quasi military discipline, gymnastics and summer camps.<sup>103</sup> The movement grew rapidly from its initial membership of thirty boys to over 65,000 by 1913.<sup>104</sup> The Catholic Boys' Brigade and the Jewish Lads' Brigade emerged soon afterwards.<sup>105</sup>

**Figure 1.4.** Joseph Bain a member of 3rd Glasgow Company (Boys' Brigade), along with his sister Mary in the uniform of the Girls Life Brigade. 1914.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> <http://www.bbglasgow.org.uk/history/archiveindex3.asp?DBImages=488&p=1&a=Photograph> [accessed 1 June 2019].

<sup>104</sup> Michael Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p.147.

<sup>105</sup> Other religious groups, including the Quakers, recognized the positive values of youth movements. They believed they could positively contribute to organisations like the Scouts although within Quakerism this was sometimes controversial. For details of Quaker values and their involvement with youth organisations: Mark Freeman, 'Muscular Quakerism? The Society of Friends and Youth Organisations in Britain, c.1900-1950,' *The English Historical Review*, 125:514 (2010), pp. 642-669.

<sup>106</sup> <<http://www.bbglasgow.org.uk/history/archiveindex3.asp?DBImages=488&p=1&a=Photograph>>

The Church Lads' was the Anglican Church's uniformed youth organisation.<sup>107</sup> It was formed in 1891 with the aim of extending the Christian message to boys and adolescents. It was based on militaristic foundations, ultimately affiliating in 1911 with the War Office cadets, but it was never really a success and its strength lay mainly in rural communities and small-towns.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, *The Times* claimed in 1922 that it was difficult to find an organisation that did more to promote, 'a high and manly tone among the boys,' and which was 'proof against the insidious whiles of Socialist and Bolshevik propaganda.'<sup>109</sup>

The Boy Scouts were a non-denominational body, created by Baden-Powell with the aim to cultivate intelligence and convert boys into better disciplined and practical citizens.<sup>110</sup> The Scouts fit the description of the more successful clubs and associations that Russell described as pursuing the broad ideal of a healthy mind and healthy body, in contrast to those making religion the central plank of their constitutions.<sup>111</sup> Their comparative strength was seemingly borne out by reports in 1924 of a serious decline in membership of the Church Lads' because the clergy felt that local brigades were expensive to run and because of concern that their khaki uniform indicates the boys were being trained to be soldiers and nothing else.<sup>112</sup> The issue of uniforms was also a criticism of the Scout movement, although unlike the Lads' it did not seem to have damaged their recruiting in Devon between 1911 and 1926 as shown in Table 1.1.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Contemporary comment about the Boys' Brigade suggested it was 'one of the most hopeful signs of the times,' M. Spencer Warren, *Quiver*; London, 759 (Jan 1900): 577-584. The Church Lads' Brigade was described as 'the public school for the middle classes.' Pat Brooklyn, *The English illustrated magazine*; London, 17 (August 1904), pp. 511-519.

<sup>108</sup> Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 148.

<sup>109</sup> 'The Church Lads' Brigade,' *The Times*, 21 June 1922, p. 21.

<sup>110</sup> 'Boy Scouts,' *Western Times*, 25 January 1910, p. 4.

<sup>111</sup> For understanding of Baden-Powell and the formation of the Scouts: John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 53-70, and comparative strengths of various youth movements 1900-1941, p. 138. Also, Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

<sup>112</sup> 'Church Lads,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 23 February 1924, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> 'In Defence of Scouts,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 8 May 1928, p. 7. For understanding of Scout uniforms and their roles within the organisation see, Tammy Proctor, '(Uni)forming youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Britain, 1908-39,' *History Workshop Journal*, 45 (1998), pp. 103-34.

**Table 1. 1.** Devon Scout numbers.<sup>114</sup>

1911	1735	
1912	2144	
1914	2186	
1923	4000	(Scouts and Cubs)
1926	4427	(Scouts and Cubs)

Michael Childs has written somewhat caustically that the ‘crowning achievement’ of the Scouts and Boys’ Brigades lay in the flocking of youth to Kitchener’s army ‘in best Boy Scout Spirit,’ and of the 50,000 ex Boys’ Brigade members and officers who were killed.<sup>115</sup> But the Scout movement was successful because under Baden-Powell it effectively evolved from an initially imperialistic and quasi-militaristic organisation into a body that avoided association with government, formal military training or recruitment, particularly as European tensions increased prior to the First World War.<sup>116</sup> Later in the 1920s, the Scouts eschewed the drift into political and martial structures that evolved in similar organisations in some European countries.<sup>117</sup> In addition, through their recognition of the needs of different age and gender groups, the Scout movement was successful in widening their appeal through the Girl Guides and Wolf Cubs, although Tebbutt has pointed out, the age of a Boy Scout was predominantly under fourteen because of a feeling that membership did not sit comfortably with those having moved from school to employment.<sup>118</sup> A cartoon in *Punch* (Figure 1.5) reflected the pre-war perception of its age-group and activities.

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<sup>114</sup> Numbers reported in the, *Western Times*, 25 January 1910, 7 November 1912. 1 June 1923 and 13 December 1926. Before 1921, there was no official breakdown of Boy Scout statistics into counties, but for a limited list of scouts per county, as reported in the 1921 census, see Springhall, p. 137.

<sup>115</sup> Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*, p. 141.

<sup>116</sup> There has been debate by historians about the level of militarism inherent in the Scout movement. Some claiming it to be exaggerated while others are less certain. For a summary of this argument see Mark Freeman, ‘Muscular Quakerism? c.1900-1950,’ pp. 642-669.

<sup>117</sup> Morris, *Clubs, Societies and Associations*, pp. 424-425.

<sup>118</sup> Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 78.

**Figure 1.5.** Small boy (to doctor about to assist elderly in fainting fit). "Stand aside, please, and don't be alarmed. I'll attend to this – I'm a boy scout." Edwardian Era cartoon, *Punch*. 11 December 1912, p. 5.

Image has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

The First World War affected the viability of clubs in general, and as a direct consequence of their wartime decline the rate of juvenile crime was described as climbing significantly. In the autumn of 1916 the Home Office reported a twelve month increase of thirty-four per cent in the number of juveniles under the age of sixteen being charged with punishable offenses.<sup>119</sup> It stated that the increase was continuing, with the war being largely responsible. It was asserted that the normal authority of parents, police and schools which controlled youths had been reduced, leading to pilfering and vandalism.<sup>120</sup> This was not a

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<sup>119</sup> 'The Increase of Juvenile Crime,' *The Times*, 6 October 1916, p. 7.

<sup>120</sup> *The Times*, 6 October 1916, p. 7.

peculiarly British problem as Germany also reported a rise in juvenile crime over the same period, possibly even greater than in the United Kingdom.<sup>121</sup> A report to the Prussian Lower House Committee said that in 1914, 51,500 juveniles had been punished, rising to 75,700 in 1915, 116,000 in 1916, and in the first half of 1917 to 70,300.<sup>122</sup> In Britain, by January 1918 it was generally believed that the closure of clubs during the war and the associated increase in juvenile crime had been exacerbated by the lack of both male and female workers.<sup>123</sup> In 1916, attempting to address this increase, the Home Office encouraged the formation of juvenile organisation committees to promote recreational opportunities for young people, and by the beginning of 1918 it was reporting that in over fifty large towns committees had been successful in reopening clubs or starting new ones.<sup>124</sup> This success was not universal with the Plymouth committee claiming it was regarded with apathy, especially by the local education authority.<sup>125</sup> The Exeter committee also failed for reasons that are not clear but probably mirrored those of Plymouth, although reports also suggested that individual charities in the city which had been encouraged to cooperate with the organisation committee had not done so seeing little merit in it.<sup>126</sup>

In the post-war period the positive influence of boys' clubs in reducing crime was often noted. In Norwich, Ipswich and Hyde, the police set up lads' clubs from their own funds which contributed to a reported, 'enormous difference' in juvenile crime figures,<sup>127</sup> and in 1929 it was recorded by the police in Plymouth that the city had a lower juvenile crime rate than most cities of a comparable size as a result of the 'excellent probation service,' which included the running

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<sup>121</sup> 'War Boosts Juvenile Crime in England and Germany,' *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 7:6 (1917), p. 925.

<sup>122</sup> 'Juvenile Crime in Germany. Increasing to a "colossal extent,"' *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 February 1918, p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> 'Organized Games,' *The Times*, 19 February 1918, p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> *The Times*, 19 February 1918.

<sup>125</sup> 'Recreation Grounds,' *Western Morning News*, 5 April 1922, p. 3.

<sup>126</sup> 'Boys' Welfare,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 3 May 1922, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> 'The Young Offender,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 8 February 1929, p. 7.

of a club to keep youngsters off the streets.<sup>128</sup> The 1920 report into juvenile delinquency also confirmed the influence of clubs, recording that from a total of 6,020 cases before magistrates only 4.46 per cent of offenses were committed by club members and the committee concluded that, 'club membership is actually a counter attraction to hooliganism, and that its influence is so good that, boy for boy, club members are better citizens than those outside any organisation.'<sup>129</sup> As Kate Bradley has observed,

through clubs, Boy Scouts, summer camps and the like, it can be said that the settlements offered opportunities for the young to participate in associational life and culture, and thereby to make friends and contacts that would be of use in the future.'<sup>130</sup>

## Crime

The subject of crime and justice has been touched upon above and while widely covered by historians, it is helpful to look at its relationship to boys and juveniles in the early twentieth century. Hendrick refers to 'something of a panic over hooliganism in the 1890s'<sup>131</sup> and Stephen Humphries refers to a moral panic by the late Victorian middle-classes as increasing juvenile literature in the form of penny dreadfuls was sensed to be contributing to working-class youth crime.<sup>132</sup> Geoffrey Parsons notes, 'the rising generation was seen to be beyond control at the turn of the century, vulnerable to the vulgarity of the Music Hall and to the copy-cat lure of crime and sensation at the silent cinema.'<sup>133</sup> Eamonn Carrabine and others, more

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<sup>128</sup> 'Well Behaved Youth,' *Western Morning News*, 10 January 1929, p. 5. The 1907 Probation Act introduced three reasons for putting an offender on probation but in general it was summarised as, 'the release of a prisoner under supervision.' Initially a prisoner was released to the supervision of a probation officer, under a recognizance to appear for conviction and sentence. But the 1927 Report of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders declared this was unsuitable and that a specific probation order should be made by the court with the stated intention that with the guidance of a probation officer it would, 'keep the offender from further crime and to help him recover his footing without resorting to institutional training.' Report of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders [Cmd 2831] p. 54.

<sup>129</sup> Board of Education. Juvenile Organisations Committee. Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920. British Library. GPA-7394, p. 14.

<sup>130</sup> Bradley, 'Growing up with a City,' pp. 285-298.

<sup>131</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p.140

<sup>132</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Geoffrey Pearson, 'Youth Crime and Moral Decline' in *Youth Justice*, p. 47.

broadly ascribe a rise in youth crime to ‘massive population growth,’ with industrialisation and urbanisation creating more opportunities, leading to authorities seeing it as evidence ‘of the collapse of traditional social controls.’<sup>134</sup>

Concern about unruly youth in Edwardian England was succinctly described by Arnold Freeman: ‘if circumstances do not provide for the healthy expression of the youthful nature, it is forced into unnatural, vicious and criminal channels.’<sup>135</sup> The press was also concerned, as recorded by the *London Echo* in 1898:

No one can have read the London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds papers and not know that the young street ruffian and prowler with his heavy belt, treacherous knife and dangerous pistol is amongst us. The question for every man that cares for the streets that are safe after dark, decent when dark, not disgraced by filthy shouts and brutal deeds is what is to be done with this new development of the city boy and slum denizen?<sup>136</sup>

Figures appeared to support assertions of youthful street criminality. Between 1895 and 1900, 675 children aged between seven and eleven were arrested by the police in Birmingham, all being remanded in prison. The Chief Constable reported that of 550 boys under the age of sixteen who were trading on the streets in July 1901, 419 had been prosecuted for various offences in the previous six months, and forty-nine children under the age of fourteen were prosecuted for felony committed in the first six months of 1901. Nevertheless, the fear of juvenile crime was probably inflated as nationally the number of offenders aged under sixteen committed to prison in 1907 was less than half the number committed in 1897.

The concept of hooliganism and delinquency has been explored by legal historian Peter Rush who argues that, ‘juvenile delinquency is a social construction, an invention of the

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<sup>134</sup> Eamonn Carrabine, *Criminology* (London: Routledge, 3rd Edition, 2014), p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 106.

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in; Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p. 175.



reformers' in the light of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation.<sup>137</sup> He submits that the emergent middle-classes were concerned adolescents did not apparently recognise or adhere to 'bourgeois values,' suggesting that delinquency simply became a label for juveniles who did not abide by middle-class standards. As a result many juveniles who were completely innocent of any crime were drawn into the reformers net. Rush concludes that this was, in effect, an 'extension of the formal control of children.'<sup>138</sup> These views are similar to those expressed by Humphries who argues that state intervention in the development of institutions to control and manipulate behaviour were symptomatic of a class conflict in which there was an attempt to force working-class youth to accept predominantly middle-class models of behaviour.<sup>139</sup> Humphries further argues that the resistance of working-class youth has been distorted because of the control by largely middle-class adults of 'manuscript and printed evidence.'<sup>140</sup> Michael Childs also refers to the effort to manipulate behaviour through the controlled environs of new or expanding organisations like reformatories, industrial schools and borstal, which targeted specific categories of problem children.<sup>141</sup> But contemporaneously the idea of further legislation and regulation to control juvenile crime was decried by the political left, as indicated by an editorial in the left-leaning *Daily Herald* in 1914 which claimed there was no need for more law to deal with juvenile delinquents and that the root cause of crime, which was poor people living in unhealthy conditions, should be resolved by parliament.<sup>142</sup>

Other historians, however, doubt if growing juvenile delinquency was a social construct. They note that the records for reported crime are incomplete and possibly understated since, by the 1920s, police forces in many areas increasingly used cautions rather than

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<sup>137</sup> Peter Rush, 'The government of a generation: the subject of juvenile delinquency,' in *Youth Justice*, p. 139.

<sup>138</sup> Rush, pp. 139–140.

<sup>139</sup> Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Humphries, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 112.

<sup>142</sup> 'Juvenile Crime and the Remedy,' *Daily Herald*, 13 February 1914, p. 10. Other contemporary analysis concluded that truancy was the major cause of juvenile crime, for example, 'Hooliganism and Juvenile Crime,' *The Nineteenth century: a monthly review*, London 48:281 (1900), 89-99. [Wellesley attribution: Drew, Andrew A W].

bringing offenders before juvenile courts. In some areas the number of cautions, which were excluded from crime statistics, being three or four times higher than the number of cases brought to court.<sup>143</sup> But regardless of whether the fear of increasing juvenile criminal activity around the turn of the century was supported by the evidence, Vic Gatrell concludes that ‘all judicial evidence, eighteenth century to modern, points to a peaking of lawless behaviour in pre-nuptial male adolescence and young adulthood,’ a view substantiated by the 1920 Education Department sponsored report into juvenile delinquency.<sup>144</sup> Their analysis was based on 7,000 case sheets returned from four unnamed juvenile courts. These were located in a major seaport, a big industrial centre, an iron manufacturing town and the artisan area of a metropolitan area.<sup>145</sup> The age and sex of offenders was seen to be almost identical across the four towns with offending peaking between twelve and sixteen, as shown in Table 1. 2.<sup>146</sup>

**Table 1. 2.** The age and sex of offenders, 1918-19.

	7yrs	8yrs	9yrs	10yrs	11yrs	12yrs	13yrs	14yrs	15yrs	% of sexes
Boys	87	238	514	727	897	1013	1080	991	1101	95.99
Girls	5	7	12	19	22	32	48	66	70	4.01

The type of offending by juveniles is outlined below, but it was seen mainly as crime resulting from a young workforce concentrated in the towns and cities. This led the middle and upper-classes to focus on an issue which had, in many ways, existed for decades. As De Venanzi observes, the law-and-order campaigns launched against hooligans at the end of the nineteenth

<sup>143</sup> E. C. Rhodes, ‘Juvenile Delinquency,’ *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 102:3 (1939), pp. 384-405 (pp. 395,402).

<sup>144</sup> Vic A.C. Gatrell, ‘Crime, Authority and the Policeman State,’ *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, Volume 3, ed., F.M.L.Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 304.

<sup>145</sup> Board of Education. Juvenile Organisations Committee. Report on Juvenile Delinquency. 1920. British Library. GPA-7394. p. 5.

<sup>146</sup> The report stated that the figures were nominally from the year 1918 although some figures were included to August 1919. A Staffordshire JP in 1925 contested that unemployment was responsible for juvenile crime. She stated that many defendant boys were still at school with a majority under age sixteen. Lucie Wedgwood, ‘Juvenile Crime,’ *Saturday review of politics, literature, science and art*; London 139:3614 (1925), p. 102.

century were not a response to an actual increase in delinquency but to an increased public perception of internal and external threats to the power and stability of the state.<sup>147</sup> To put juvenile crime in the early twentieth century into perspective, the number of offenders aged under sixteen committed to prison in 1907 was less than half the number committed in 1897 with over sixty per cent of sentences for seven days or less.<sup>148</sup> For juvenile-adults, (aged sixteen to twenty-one) there was a decline of 2,000 over 1905-06.<sup>149</sup>

In the Report of the Commissioners of Prisons from 1906, evidence from Birmingham prison illustrates the efforts made to enforce modes of middle-class behaviour. Prisoners between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one were given lectures on topics that included; respect for parents, the bible, self-control, thrift, industry, success and the evil effects of alcohol upon youth.<sup>150</sup> Similar lectures were given in Durham including temperance, perseverance, character, honour, punishment as discipline, healthy body, healthy mind and how to succeed in life.<sup>151</sup> Comparable approaches were commonplace in many other prisons, and reinforcing the image of working-class youth as the principle problem evidence from Warwick stated that, ‘the average juvenile-adult offender is far less impressionable at that age than the average public school boy, and far more difficult to deal with.’<sup>152</sup>

To deal with juveniles under the age of sixteen deemed to be wayward, mischievous and sometimes serial offenders, juvenile courts were established in 1908.<sup>153</sup> Separately, they

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<sup>147</sup> Augusto De Venanzi, ‘Social Representations and the Labelling of Non-Compliant Youths: The Case of Victorian and Edwardian Hooligans,’ *Deviant Behaviour*, 29:3, (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 193-224.

<sup>148</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons and the Directors of Convict Prisons, with Appendices, for the year 1906-07 (Prisons: Annual Report), [Cd. 3738].

<sup>149</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cd. 3738].

<sup>150</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons and the Directors of Convict Prisons, with Appendices, for the year 1905-06 (Prisons: Annual Report) [Cd.3169] p. 209.

<sup>151</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cd.3169] p. 291.

<sup>152</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cd.3169] p. 502.

<sup>153</sup> 1908 (69) Children. A bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the protection of children and young persons, reformatory and industrial schools, and juvenile offenders, and otherwise to amend the law with respect to children and young persons. See also, Kate Bradley, ‘Juvenile delinquency and the evolution of the British juvenile courts, c.1900-1950,’ *History in Focus*, (2008), and Barry Godfrey, Pamela Cox, and others, *Young Criminal Lives: Life Courses and Life Chances from 1850* (Oxford: OUP, 2017).

were tasked with addressing the needs of neglected children; a move towards greater state involvement in welfare.<sup>154</sup> But some historians warn that positive changes in dealing with young offenders through juvenile courts should not be overstated, pointing to the fact that the courts were still places of punishment and correction, with juveniles over the age of fourteen liable for whipping or imprisonment.<sup>155</sup> Regarding the sentencing of children and juveniles it was noted that magistrates were often ‘groping in a twilight of uncertainty.’<sup>156</sup> To resolve this, the 1920 Report on Juvenile Delinquency proposed that after a number of transgressions a ‘consulting advisor’ to a magistrate should visit the offender’s home for discussion with the parents so that with a fuller understanding of their circumstances the best interests of the child could be taken into account by the sentencing magistrate.<sup>157</sup> Evidence was given to the 1927 Report of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders that there was little difference between delinquent or neglected children, ‘neglect leads to delinquency, is often the direct outcome of neglect,’ although it was felt that the neglected child was often more difficult to deal than the child who was simply in trouble because of high spirits and ‘dare devilry.’<sup>158</sup> There was a proposition that neglected children should be dealt with separately from ‘delinquent children’ but the committee rejected this as unsound because of the apparent direct link between delinquency and neglect.<sup>159</sup> The greatest number of neglected children were identified as those living with parents in receipt of poor law relief.<sup>160</sup> There were several descriptions in the 1908 Children’s Act of what constituted criminal neglect including, those children found begging, those who were found ‘wandering’ with no responsible guardian, those who were destitute, those who lived with unfit parents or guardians or in a house used for

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<sup>154</sup> Report of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders 1927 [Cmd. 2831] pp.15,16. Barry Godfrey, Pamela Cox suggest that in the 1860s the state first intervened in child protection by drawing up criteria by which children could be removed from the care of their parents. *Young Criminal Lives*, p. 23.

<sup>155</sup> Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice 1750-1950* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 137.

<sup>156</sup> Board of Education Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, p. 34.

<sup>157</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, pp. 34, 35. British Library. GPA-7394.

<sup>158</sup> Departmental Committee on young offenders, 1927 [Cmd. 2831] p. 72.

<sup>159</sup> Departmental Committee on young offenders, 1927 [Cmd. 2831] p. 73.

<sup>160</sup> Departmental Committee on young offenders, 1927 [Cmd. 2831] p. 115.

prostitution, and those who frequented the company of thieves or prostitutes.<sup>161</sup> In 1913, 37,520 juveniles under sixteen were dealt with in Juvenile Courts.<sup>162</sup> Of these 2,282 were sent to Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 2,070 were whipped and 4,465 placed under probation.<sup>163</sup> By 1917 the number dealt with by the Courts had risen to 51,323 with 3,427 going to institutions, nearly 5,000 were whipped, and 6,548 were dealt with by probation.<sup>164</sup> It was claimed that the use of reformatories or industrial schools for first or second time offenders significantly reduced the propensity to re-offend.<sup>165</sup> By 1932 the numbers had declined significantly with 27,777 delinquents under sixteen dealt with by the Juvenile Courts, 1,322 sent to Home Office Schools, only 144 were whipped, and the number put on probation rose to 7,717.<sup>166</sup> It was commented that,

these more “lenient”; methods of treatment do not appear to have increased crime. On the contrary, the official statistics show that the total number of juveniles brought before the Courts, ... has now fallen by nearly 50 per cent.<sup>167</sup>

The declining trend was also noted by the 1920 Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. They observed that between sixty and seventy-seven per cent<sup>168</sup> of those in front of juvenile courts were first time offenders, with returning offenders usually charged for similar offences.<sup>169</sup>

Immediately after the First World War reported figures for juvenile crime declined appreciably with, in 1919, a national drop to levels below those for 1913-1914.<sup>170</sup> In

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<sup>161</sup> Departmental Committee on young offenders, 1927 [Cmd. 2831] p. 117.

<sup>162</sup> The Right Honourable the Earl of Feversham, ‘Probation and Juvenile Crime,’ *Probation Journal*, 2:1 (1935), 11,12.

<sup>163</sup> *Probation Journal*, 2:1 (1935), p.12.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>165</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, p. 24. British Library. GPA-7394. Earlier analysis reviewing the various forms of reformatories and industrial training, concluded they were valuable in providing a new and sympathetic environment for juvenile offenders. Hugh B Philpott, *Quiver*; London Iss. 220 (1906), 290-296.

<sup>166</sup> *Probation Journal*, 2:1 (1935), pp. 11,12.

<sup>167</sup> *Probation Journal*, pp. 11,12.

<sup>168</sup> Three of the four centres reporting figures saw first time offenders representing around 75% of cases, only one court produced a figure as low as 60% .

<sup>169</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, p.19. British Library. GPA-7394.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Films and Crime,’ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 18 February 1921, p. 5.

Birmingham the figures for offenders under the age of sixteen, for 1917, 1918 and 1919 respectively were, 1,805, 1,630 and 1,335.<sup>171</sup> But the subsequent fall in crime reported nationally, and also locally in Birmingham, Plymouth and Devon during the 1920s should be treated with some caution because as already noted, police forces increasingly used cautions instead of bringing offenders before juvenile courts. Nevertheless, in 1921 Plymouth police reported a 'big diminution' in juvenile crime,<sup>172</sup> while in Exeter juvenile crime figures for 1925 were forty-eight per cent lower than for the previous year.<sup>173</sup> Across Devon juvenile crime (for both indictable and non-indictable offenses) fell by twenty-five per cent between 1924 and 1928, with indictable crime alone down by nearly forty per cent.<sup>174</sup> In Birmingham, while the figures for all crime increased in 1923, juvenile crime fell,<sup>175</sup> and in 1926 the police reported a fall of over eleven per cent compared to the previous year.<sup>176</sup>

But while juvenile crime figures were apparently in decline,<sup>177</sup> fears of delinquency remained throughout the 1920s driven by what was perceived to be greater moral permissiveness.<sup>178</sup> The broad consensus of prison authorities was that young offenders should not be sentenced to prison unless their offence warranted a sentence of at least three months and it was recognised that short sentences did not allow for any training in rehabilitation and that it brought vulnerable youths into contact with other delinquents.<sup>179</sup> Fuller use of borstal and the probation service was widely recommended, a view reinforced by the 1920 report into delinquency which, in observing that most juveniles placed on probation were aged fourteen

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<sup>171</sup> 'Juvenile Crime in the City,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 26 March 1921. p. 6.

<sup>172</sup> 'Decrease in Crime,' *Western Morning News*, 6 January 1922, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> 'Police Statistics,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 27 January 1926, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> 'Juvenile Offenders,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 27 February 1929, p. 5.

<sup>175</sup> 'Increase in Crime in Birmingham,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 18 August 1924, p. 6.

<sup>176</sup> 'Women Police Praised,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 22 July 1927, p. 7.

<sup>177</sup> See, John Davis, *Youth and the Condition of Britain. Images of Adolescent Conflict*, pp. 71-74. He provides statistics for juvenile crime from the early 1910s to the early 1930s showing that while juvenile crime increased during the First World War and again during the General Strike, figures for the whole period remained remarkably stable. He claims that juvenile delinquency was not a pressing social concern in the 1920s.

<sup>178</sup> Barry Godfrey and Peter Lawrence, *Crime and Justice 1750-1950*, p. 139.

<sup>179</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons and the directors of convict prisons, for the year 1923-1924 [Cmd.2307] pp. 38-68.

or over, recommended it should be more widely used for children between the ages of eleven to thirteen. It was proposed that rather than the normal practice of waiting to place an offender on probation after a string of offences, probation should be used as soon as possible after the first offense.<sup>180</sup> The holding of juvenile offenders on remand was also questioned, since many lads were subsequently discharged because of the low level of their offense.<sup>181</sup> The medical officer at Feltham borstal claimed that the delinquent 'of today' was unique in that they resulted in circumstances caused by the war. He reiterated the widely held view that this was because of the absence of fathers and other male role models, coupled with the relatively easy access to money during the war.<sup>182</sup> This rationale for juvenile indiscipline was, however, challenged by the 1920 Juvenile Organisations Committee report on juvenile delinquency, which questioned the claim that absentee fathers were a reason for a lack of discipline among boys. The report noted that the absentee figure was highest in 1918 with a sharp drop thereafter, but even at its height it was only relevant in 29.3% of all juvenile cases.<sup>183</sup>

The 1924 Report of the Commissioners of Prisons identified the three main causes of juvenile delinquency as a lack of parental control, an unsatisfactory home environment and unemployment.<sup>184</sup> Educationalist and psychologist Cyril Burt also recognised these categories and put them in order, based on a coefficient of association: defective discipline .55, poverty .5, vicious homes .39, defective family relationships .33.<sup>185</sup> The influence of poverty as a cause of youthful crime was highlighted by the 1920 delinquency report with its conclusion that of all offenses committed by boys from families below the poverty line 78.48 per cent were cases

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<sup>180</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, p. 30. British Library. GPA-7394.

<sup>181</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cmd.2307] pp. 38-68.

<sup>182</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cmd.2307] p. 67. It is worth noting current research on people born between 2000 and 2001 which found that with regard to violence, risk factors include the absence of a father figure, cited in *The Times*, 29 July 2019, p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Board of Education. Juvenile Organisations Committee. Report on Juvenile Delinquency. 1920. British Library. GPA-7394, p. 12.

<sup>184</sup> Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cmd.2307].

<sup>185</sup> L. W. Kline, 'Review of the Young Delinquent.' *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 21:2 (1926), pp. 224-226.

of theft, while from those better off families the percentage was ‘only’ 57.48 per cent.<sup>186</sup> The committee found much theft was of food, and that if growing boys had been fed properly their propensity to steal would have diminished. After theft, the greatest number of serious offences were of house and warehouse breaking.<sup>187</sup> But while extreme poverty was noted as a contributory cause of theft, over two thirds of offenders did not live in deprivation, the conclusion being, it was often ‘the love of adventure’ that was the stimulation to commit crime.<sup>188</sup> In general, it was observed that criminal activity became more entrenched at the age of sixteen because many boys who had been employed in blind-alley work were replaced by younger school leavers.<sup>189</sup>

## **Emigration**

Compulsory emigration has long been recognised as punishment for adult convicts, first to the Caribbean and latterly to Australia, and up until its abolition in 1868 male children and juveniles were also deported. But the subject of juvenile emigration is addressed in this chapter because it was a route that some UK children and adolescents took on their way to adulthood, and not as a result of any criminal behaviour. This thesis is primarily concerned with boys over the age of twelve, but a problem encountered in analysing youthful migration is that official government reports often referred only to fourteen to nineteen-year-old juveniles. In this section, where child (under fourteen) emigration figures are available they will be identified,

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<sup>186</sup> The poverty line varied depending on the number of dependents in each family but Seebohm Rowntree determined that for a family of four the lowest weekly sum they could exist on was £36 10s., plus their rent. Quoted in, Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920, British Library. GPA-7394, pp. 10-11.

<sup>187</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency, p. 17.

<sup>188</sup> Report on Juvenile Delinquency. p. 17.

<sup>189</sup> Service towns experienced unique causes for juvenile crime. In Plymouth a third of all young prisoners (seventeen out of fifty-four) committed to magistrate courts in 1923-24 were soldiers or sailors who had deliberately offended to obtain a discharge, and in Portsmouth, twenty-three young prisoners offended for the same reasons. Army recruits took similar action in Winchester. Report of the Commissioners of Prisons [Cmd 2307] p. 59.



but more generally the analysis will be based on government and philanthropic organisation figures for those aged fourteen or over and indicated as juvenile or youth migration.

The majority of child emigration schemes began in 1870. Voluntary organisations were frequently involved with Barnardo's claiming successful results in 1906, asserting that their emigrants came from circumstances of 'destitution or evil environment.'<sup>190</sup> They reported that they had relocated nearly 17,500 young people over thirty years and claimed the Canadian government had said that 98.5% turned out to be 'desirable and prosperous colonists.'<sup>191</sup> In the opinion of Barnardo's, had these juveniles remained in the U.K. they would have been unemployed and living in the most over-crowded ten per cent of the population. They estimated the total cost per emigrant as £10, including clothes and travel.<sup>192</sup> In 1921 a government reported indicated that the majority of juvenile emigration had been facilitated by Dr Barnardo's or similar voluntary organisations, and that most emigration had gone to Canada, which was the only Dominion having a regulation system for juvenile migration. The numbers, however, were relatively small with 1,426 migrating in 1920.<sup>193</sup>

Religious and philanthropic bodies were concerned that children of working-class parents, or orphans, were a potential social problem and even a possible threat to society.<sup>194</sup> These organisations believed that rescuing children from predominantly deprived urban environments would benefit the Empire and lessen the weight on society.<sup>195</sup> While emigration was the preserve of voluntary organisations, the government in the form of the Departmental Committee on Agricultural Settlements stated in 1906 that:

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<sup>190</sup> 'English Overcrowding and Juvenile Emigration,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 March 1906, p. 9.

<sup>191</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 March 1906, p. 9.

<sup>192</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, p. 9.

<sup>193</sup> Report of the Oversea Settlement Committee (henceforth OSC) for the year ended 31 December 1922, [Cmd. 1804] XII.PT.2, 217, p. 13.

<sup>194</sup> Geoffrey Robinson and Chris Jeffrey, cited by Scott Johnston in, "'Only Send Boys of the Good Type': Child Migration and the Boy Scout Movement, 1921-1959," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 7:3, (2014), pp. 377-397.

<sup>195</sup> Johnston, 'Only Send Boys of the Good Type,' pp. 377-397.

We consider juvenile emigration to be a most valuable and hopeful form of emigration ... The results of juvenile emigrations are so encouraging that we should be glad to see the system extended.<sup>196</sup>

Ultimately government became a direct financial participant in the migration movement, and in 1918 the OSC was formed to advise it. The Empire Settlement Act of 1922 provided that the UK Government would pursue a policy of continuous overseas settlement and would contribute financially in any scheme established to further these objectives.<sup>197</sup> The Settlement Committee echoed the 1906 report in recommending encouragement for the overseas settlement of the young.<sup>198</sup> By 1920 the apparent pressure to facilitate youthful migration had increased because of the perceived inability of industry to absorb the working age population, 'for an indefinite but long period of time.'<sup>199</sup> By 1927 the committee was assisting 7,000 juveniles and children a year to emigrate and was making grants to the Salvation Army and a further fourteen juvenile migration societies including the YMCA, the Scouts, the Methodist Brotherhood, the Public Schools Employment Bureau and the British Dominions Emigration Society.<sup>200</sup> Between 1921 and 1959 nearly five thousand youths were assisted by the Scout movement alone in migrating to the Dominions.<sup>201</sup>

The Settlement Committee referred to the wide open spaces existing in the Dominions and claimed they would benefit from British migration, but the policy was not supported by the Labour Party. Keir Hardie asserted that as it did not suit British capitalists 'to have adolescents now,' they were prepared to see them torn from their homes, and he claimed that far from being overpopulated there were plenty of places in the UK that could, and needed to accommodate more people; referring specifically to Scotland.<sup>202</sup> The Labour-supporting *Daily Herald*,

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<sup>196</sup> Quoted in: Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1921 [Cmd. 1580] X.1.

<sup>197</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1927 [Cmd. 3088] XI.805. p. 5.

<sup>198</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1921 [Cmd. 1580] X.1. p. 23.

<sup>199</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1922 [Cmd.1804] XII.PT.2, 217. p. 6 .

<sup>200</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1927, pp. 8, 28.

<sup>201</sup> Johnston, 'Only Send Boys of the Good Type,' pp. 377-397.

<sup>202</sup> House of Commons, *House of Commons debate*, 14 February 1923. Vol. 160, c. 144.

claimed letters it received from around the Empire highlighted that unemployment was rife and that emigration should be stopped.<sup>203</sup> Christopher Bischof also notes that the government and child psychologists began to lose confidence in the value of child (under fourteen) migration amid reports that children had been overworked and abused.<sup>204</sup> But in contrast, juvenile migration for those aged between fourteen and eighteen was deemed relatively straightforward because they had completed their schooling and required minimal training or supervision.<sup>205</sup> Until the early twenties, however, there was little emigration of juveniles to Canada with the problem being a lack of hostel accommodation and training facilities for those working on farms.<sup>206</sup> The *Daily Herald* warned in 1923 that Canadian farmers were using apprentices as low paid workers, with the demand for juvenile emigrants fifteen times greater than the supply.<sup>207</sup> Furthermore, the paper claimed that at the end of an apprenticeship, employment often ended. Juvenile migration to Australia had also been encouraged for some time, but as in Canada, there was initially a lack of training facilities and accommodation. Employment Exchanges were identified to provide the official machinery for dealing with assisted passage to Australia.<sup>208</sup> There were relatively small schemes set up by bodies keen to attract juvenile labour, some with apparently generous incentives. The New Zealand Sheep Owners' Fund Farm Training Scheme from the early 1920s, established for boys whose fathers had died serving in the mercantile marine or Royal Navy during the war.<sup>209</sup> Boys from Plymouth were recipients of the fund which provided:

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<sup>203</sup> 'Why Export Boys to Australia?' *Daily Herald*, 17 February 1923, p. 3.

<sup>204</sup> Christopher Bischof, review of *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the Decline of the British World, 1869–1967* (review no. 1663), DOI: 10.14296/RiH/2014/1663.

<sup>205</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1922 [Cmd. 1804] XII.PT.2, 217, p. 11.

<sup>206</sup> Report of the OSC for the year ended 31 December 1922, p. 18.

<sup>207</sup> 'Only Boys Wanted,' *Daily Herald*, 16 May 1923, p. 5.

<sup>208</sup> OSC for the year ended 31 December 1922, p. 27. An advertisement in the *Western Morning News*, 8 March 1923, p.10, seeking boys to work in agriculture, shows there were other agencies that helped with passage and financial assistance, in this case the West of England Emigration Service based at 10 Millbay road, Plymouth. The advertisement highlights the importance of Plymouth as an embarkation point with steamers advertised as being 'direct to Australia.'

<sup>209</sup> 'Migration of Juveniles,' *Western Morning News*, 1 January 1926, p. 9.

medical examination and dental treatment, full outfit of clothing, full cost of journey, training for six months at a special farm, pocket-money during training, and afterwards guaranteed indentured employment for three years with farmers of good character, with satisfactory wages.<sup>210</sup>

Unfortunately no testimony exists to show if the scheme was successful in providing long term employment for boys after their guaranteed indenture period had expired.

Juvenile migration was seen as part of a solution for reinforcing the white British population across the Empire and of resolving unemployment and poverty in the worst overcrowded urban areas of Britain. Stephen Constantine claims that, 'sending children overseas to enjoy the resources and opportunities which the overseas empire was judged to contain was expected to benefit its white settler societies while easing social problems in Britain.'<sup>211</sup> At the end of the 1920s both Canada and Australia were still actively seeking migrant boys, with New South Wales concerned they could not compete with Ontario's offer of travel and interest free loans of £500 for those reaching the age of twenty-one.<sup>212</sup> Canadian immigration policy was stated as being, 'a chief means of reinforcing our population and filling up the vast waste spaces of Canada,' although like Australia their preferred settlers were those coming from the UK or the United States.<sup>213</sup> The work experiences of immigrant boys was not however, universally a happy one as described in the Australian archives guide:

there were serious problems for the majority. They were city boys being trained as farm labourers, and existing as strangers in a strange land. They were young and immature,

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<sup>210</sup> *Western Morning News*, 1 January 1926, p. 9.

<sup>211</sup> Stephen Constantine, 'Child migration: philanthropy, the state and the empire,' *History in Focus*, issue 14, 2008. <<https://archives.history.ac.uk/history-in-focus/welfare/articles/constantines.html>>. There was some concern about the welfare protection afforded children sent to the colonies with the argument that as abuse was a function of people, it was just as likely to occur in the wide open spaces of the colonies as in a congested British urban slum, see David Beckingham, 'Scale and Moral Geographies of Victorian and Edwardian Child Protection' *Journal of Historical Geography*, 42 (2013), pp. 140-151 (p. 149).

<sup>212</sup> National Archives of Australia (NAA), 'Dreadnought boys, 1929-1943,' A659, 1943/1/1892, p. 32.

<sup>213</sup> 'Canada's Immigration Policy,' *Canada Year Book* (1930), pp. 165-166. The NAA have a fully digitised record of migration policy which includes details of boys from a range of UK organisations. These included the YMCA, Boy Scouts, Farm Schools, Dr Barnardo's and church organisations.

scattered over vast distances, exploitable and exploited. They suffered loneliness, homesickness, 'Pommy bashing' and culture shock.<sup>214</sup>

Summing up this chapter which has provided context for the subsequent analysis of education and employment for boys aged twelve to nineteen, it is reasonable to conclude that in broad terms José Harris's analysis, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, is uncontroversial in asserting that the period 1890-1914 was unique in putting social policy at the centre British intellectual life. Many reforming movements began earlier than 1890, and as has been described, the Victorian period saw a plethora of enthusiastic and effective individuals active in industrial and social reform. Nevertheless, the period from 1890 saw an unparalleled rise in organisations and associations. They reflected the rapid rise in population, increasing urbanisation and changes to the industrial landscape, as well as intellectual shifts in attitudes towards juvenile employment, youth crime and punishment, parental responsibility and a potentially increasing role for the state in welfare.<sup>215</sup> The legislative programmes, including the Balfour government's 1902 Education Act, the Campbell-Bannerman administration's initiatives and the full-blown Liberal social reforms from 1909, reflected this exceptional period of social innovation. Mirroring formal government reforms, philanthropic efforts began to coalesce into coordinated and more effective groups and organisations.<sup>216</sup> After the war the legislative process slowed but the roots of pre-war activity continued to support many social initiatives, particularly as they affected the young and adolescent. As well as moralistic and philanthropic work there was increased input from psychologists, educationalists, criminologists and social workers, as described later in this thesis. While positivity was clear,

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<sup>214</sup> NAA. 'Good British Stock: Child and Youth Migration to Australia.' Chapter 3: Guide to the Records. <[guides.naa.gov.au/good-british-stock/chapter3/dreadnought%20.aspx](http://guides.naa.gov.au/good-british-stock/chapter3/dreadnought%20.aspx)> [Accessed 5 June 2019].

<sup>215</sup> For a contemporary view of parental responsibilities see Thomas Holmes, 'Youthful Offenders and Parental Responsibility,' *The Contemporary Review* (June 1900), pp. 845-854.

<sup>216</sup> Simon Szreter argues that as well as the Edwardian Liberal reforms supported by intellectuals, politicians and Fabian civil servants, local government employees and local educationalists, 'have rarely been given the attention they deserve as an empowering and progressive agency.' *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain, 1860-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 191.

issues relating to industrial decline, and in particular to a perceived physical deterioration of working-class youth, were for a time of increasing concern, as described in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: A question of physical deterioration

The notion of physical deterioration might not appear to sit naturally in a thesis following the progression of boys from education to employment, but the perceived condition of youth and assessment of their ability to ultimately contribute to society is important, colouring attitudes to reform and legislation both in education and employment. In his analysis of racial deterioration Richard Soloway concludes that because of the Darwinian revolution and increasing interest in biological explanations, it was not unexpected that at the turn of the twentieth century there was growing belief that the expansion of urban society was weakening health, moral health and the physical characteristics of the population.<sup>1</sup> Vanessa Heggie refers to the military recruitment figures that were often quoted in support of the existence of general physical degeneration and to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration report of 1904, which she claims, acted ‘as a dénouement of degenerationist fears in Britain.’<sup>2</sup> Heggie submits that no historian has tried to contextualise the recruitment figures,<sup>3</sup> and Elise Smith, in the light of the apparent disproportionate weight given at the time to one set of arguably specious statistics, concludes that debate about deterioration was more qualitative than quantitative, based on apparent military failure and perceived economic decline rather than being statistically supported.<sup>4</sup> Heggie also questions the use of the word ‘degeneration’ suggesting it is problematic, particularly as it has been used by historians, interchangeably with

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates: The Statistics of Race Deterioration in Edwardian England,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 17:1 (1982), pp. 137-164.

<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Heggie, ‘Lies, Damn Lies and Manchester’s Recruiting Statistics: Degeneration as an “Urban Legend” in Victorian and Edwardian Britain,’ *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 63:2 (2008), pp. 178-216.

<sup>3</sup> Heggie, ‘Lies, Damn Lies and Manchester’s Recruiting Statistics,’ pp. 178-216.

<sup>4</sup> Elise Juzda Smith, ‘Class, Health and the Proposed British Anthropometric Survey of 1904,’ *Social History of Medicine*, 28:2 (2015), pp. 308-329.

physical deterioration and racial decline. She proposes that the perception of degeneration in the 1900s was, in fact, an urban legend,<sup>5</sup> a phrase that Elise Smith repeats.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter provides context to the recruitment figures but also explains many of the fears of society to which Soloway refers. At the turn of the twentieth century the idea of a physical deterioration of British men was widely held, in part stimulated by the unexpectedly poor showing of British forces in the South African wars. There was concern that it had taken Britain, a leading military power, three years at a cost of £250 million to subdue an ill-trained, irregular force.<sup>7</sup> *The Times* contemplated the future efficiency of a British army based on conscription, baldly noting as fact, ‘the physical deterioration of the population of our great towns and cities,’ and suggested that the state had somehow abrogated its responsibilities for physical training of the industrial population to ‘the chance efforts of philanthropists.’<sup>8</sup> The growing economic and military power of states like Germany was seen as threatening Britain’s industrial position and there were fears this was because she was falling behind in the physical development of youth.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, following the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the view became more widespread that if human existence had less to do with divine creation than biological evolution, then there was no guarantee of continuing progress and things could well go backwards.<sup>10</sup> As Heggie notes, there was concern that if physical and moral decline like poverty were hereditary, then solutions to these perceived weaknesses were essential to protect the future health of the nation.<sup>11</sup> Soloway concludes that ‘the unease about the future was perhaps more obvious because it was in such a contrast to the confidence and optimism that had obtained for most of the nineteenth century.’<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Heggie, ‘Lies, Damn Lies ...’ p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> Elise Juzda Smith, ‘Class, Health and the Proposed British Anthropometric Survey of 1904,’ p. 309.

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birth-rate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1902, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 8 September 1904, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice 1750-1950* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Heggie, ‘Lies, Damn Lies ...’ p. 179.

<sup>12</sup> Soloway, ‘Counting the Degenerates,’ p. 3.



The on-going mechanisation of manufacturing and the commensurate contracting of rural populations through migration to the towns and cities, were of concern to many in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. There was growing unease about the physical condition of working-class youth, particularly in the expanding industrial centres. By the beginning of the twentieth century over three quarters of the population were living in an urban environment and it was widely held that poor quality housing and food in the slums of the industrial centres was causing the degeneration of the working-class. An MP observed that many had become unemployable because ‘they had been born in the slums and raised on gin and fog.’<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, there was concern that British lads were ‘condemned ... to indoor occupations in shops and offices, ... while their contemporaries in Germany are undergoing sound, physical training in the open air.’<sup>14</sup>

Agricultural workers’ health was also believed to be suffering because increasing rents for tenant farmers led to labourers being, ‘ground down and that the peasantry are suffering from physical deterioration.’<sup>15</sup> In Devon it was reported that both rural and urban deprivation had a harmful effect on physical well-being:

Plymouth and Devonport were sadly overcrowded and the conditions in many rural districts were disgraceful. Overcrowding was largely responsible for physical deterioration and ill-health.<sup>16</sup>

Following the South African wars, the Director General of the Army Medical Services questioned in 1903, that if the poor standard of recruits’ physique was representative of a large percentage of the population what use were they likely to be in a wider social and employment

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Housing of the Working Classes,’ *The Times*, 19 February 1903, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Letter, ‘Physical Deterioration,’ *The Times*, 2 January 1904, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 17 June 1911, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> ‘The Housing of the Working Classes,’ *Western Times*, 13 October 1904, p. 4.

context?<sup>17</sup> But the subsequent Physical Deterioration report of 1904 found that although about fifty percent of applicants were turned down by the army, it did not mean they were necessarily physically degenerate and it went on to state that the impression gleaned from numerous witnesses did not support the belief there had been any progressive physical deterioration.<sup>18</sup> The army admitted that in many cases potential recruits were physically fit but simply failed to meet the requirements of height and weight. Any suggestion, therefore, that the army's recruitment figures substantiated the belief that the physical state of the wider working-class was deteriorating should be treated cautiously, because as the Physical Deterioration report also indicated, the army's recruits generally came from the lower social class in which there was a higher proportion of 'weaklings and degenerates.'<sup>19</sup> It went on, that even within this 'lower social class' there was no evidence to indicate that things were getting worse:

In the lowest stratum of the population there has always been, and as far as can be foreseen there always will be, a large proportion of weaklings and incapables. But there is no data to determine whether that proportion is increasing or not.<sup>20</sup>

The report also described factors affecting change in the socio-economic status of potential recruits. This included improved access to education and the increasing reluctance of young men to accept the deprivations and restrictions of personal freedoms inherent in army service that led many, who previously had gravitated towards the army as a natural course, to aspire to work in civil employment instead.<sup>21</sup> The army was increasingly, 'the last refuge of a number of young men who, from lack of ability or other causes, are unable to find anything better.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 1903 Memorandum by the Director-General, Army Medical Service, on the physical unfitness of men offering themselves for enlistment in the army [Cd 1501] p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> 'Physical Deterioration,' *Totnes Times*, 30 July 1904, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> 1904 Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix to the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol III. Appendix and General Index [Cd 2186] p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration, p. 14.

Nevertheless, the army sought to understand the causes of physical deficiency and how improvements might be attained.<sup>23</sup> The shortage of recruits did not appear initially to affect Birmingham which was considered one of the best recruiting centres in England. Enlistment in the army in 1904 was reported as very healthy, with volunteers being of a ‘remarkably high calibre,’ necessitating tight adherence to minimum physical requirements.<sup>24</sup>

Referring to differences between social groups, Dr Alfred Eichholz, a school medical inspector, in evidence to the 1904 committee stated that he took three specific sets of children, the well to do, the ‘average industrial artisan population’ which constituted by far the largest proportion of children, and the slum population. It was only the last group within the aggregation of all children that had stimulated public interest in the young’s physical condition. He concluded that in general, youthful physical degeneration was in decline.<sup>25</sup> Statistics supported his contention, with the ‘average ... industrial schoolboy of fourteen’ improving his chest measurement by three-quarters of an inch, height by half an inch and weight by three pounds since the early 1880s.<sup>26</sup> Other witnesses highlighted the poor quality of mothers’ health before birth that often contributed to the birth of weak children, together with polluted and overcrowded living conditions and bad nutrition which often led to delayed development of children through ailments like rickets. But the committee concluded that parenting was generally better than it had been twenty-five years previously and the physical condition of infants and children was generally improving.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the positive tone of official reports, some commentators were convinced that a physical deterioration of the general population was obvious. George F. Millin, author of the

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<sup>23</sup> 1903 Memorandum by Director General, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> ‘A High Physical Standard,’ *Birmingham Mail*, 11 January 1905, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> 1904 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration Vol. II. List of Witnesses and Evidence (Physical Deterioration) [Cd. 2210] p. 19. Eichholz was subsequently chief medical inspector to the BOE. His obituary, *The British Medical Journal*, 18 February 1933, p. 294.

<sup>26</sup> ‘The National Physique,’ *Birmingham Mail*, 8 March 1905, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> 1904 [Cd. 2210] Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, p. 327.

*The Village Problem* wrote that there was, ‘evidence of a striking kind that people of our large towns at any rate are physically deteriorating’ and that, ‘they are stunted and pale and weak-looking when compared with our agricultural population.’<sup>28</sup>

Noting the economic waste through the condition of the slum populations of the cities, *The Times* claimed that any system that improved ‘physically degraded people,’ would have significant economic values.<sup>29</sup> Edward Urwick, however, questioned if many of the defects attributed to the life of poor boys actually existed, suggesting that some claims were misleading, disseminated by philanthropists with an axe to grind and by the ‘irresponsible word-painting of the journalist’ who was prone to exaggeration.<sup>30</sup> The *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser* provided an example in 1903 under the intemperate headline, ‘The Rot of the Race:’

This physical deterioration of at least part of our race is essentially a working-class problem ... everybody should know pretty well what are the causes of the deplorable falling off in the physique of the classes to whom the facts apply ... The gutter population is succumbing to worse surroundings, evil habits, and the despair born of hopeless poverty ... this canker that is eating away the life of England.<sup>31</sup>

Urwick, while cautious about a general criticism of the physical state of poor boys, acknowledged that reports emanating from ‘Commission and Committee’ reflected negatively on their physical condition, and he accepted that ‘the medical proof of physical degeneracy is definite and very positive.’<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Summary of today’s News,’ *Western Morning News*, 18 February 1903, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1902, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities*, p. 256.

<sup>31</sup> *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 26 September 1903, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life*, p. 257.

As already noted, however, the medical proof of degeneracy was not universally acknowledged. Doctor Barnardo reportedly said that slum children had not ‘in recent years deteriorated’ but on the contrary had significantly improved.<sup>33</sup> And even Urwick observed that, ‘surely some further modification is needed in order to reconcile the doctrine of degeneracy with the facts?’<sup>34</sup> Other facts also failed to support the idea of youthful degeneracy. The death rate between 1901 and 1905 for those aged ten to fifteen and fifteen to twenty, was between two and three per cent, the lowest for any age-group in the UK.<sup>35</sup> It would seem likely that if the physical condition of juveniles had fallen as significantly as some perceived, the death rate compared to other age groups might in proportion have been greater, not lower. And regarding the idea widely promulgated that country boys were generally healthier than their urban counterparts and that incoming boys to the towns and cities would strengthen the gene pool, not all observers agreed. Dr Archdall Reid presented a paper at the London Sociological Society in 1904 concluding that,

We have frequently been told that no city family can persist for more than four generations unless fortified by country blood. That, I believe, is a complete error. Country blood does not strengthen city blood.<sup>36</sup>

In a positive report (1909) the BOE also noted that solutions to children’s health were readily identifiable stating that:

It is probably no exaggeration to say that the improvement that could be affected in the physique of elementary school children in the poor parts of our large towns if their parents could be taught or persuaded to spend the same amount of money as they now spend on their children’s food in a more enlightened and sensible manner.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Urwick, p. 267.

<sup>34</sup> Urwick, p. 264.

<sup>35</sup> 1909 Public health and social conditions. Statistical memoranda and charts prepared in the Local Government Board relating to public health and social conditions. Section 2.-Public Health, Chart 4 [Cd. 4671].

<sup>36</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life*, p. 266.

<sup>37</sup> Board of Education. Report on the working of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906, up to the 31 March 1909 [Cd. 5131] p. 5.

This was exemplified by a coroner's report into the death of a child of two who had lived on a diet of fish and chips. He concluded that 'we were such a conservative nation that the habit of feeding children on food that was perfectly poisonous to them showed no diminution whatsoever.'<sup>38</sup>

An exchange of letters in *The Times* in 1903 reflected the ongoing debate over the physical status of adolescents, and how it was measured and quantified. One reader compared the physical condition of boys over several years in part of east London and claimed it proved that their physical state had fallen. In response another argued that such a geographically restricted sample could not give a balanced result and that an average of all boys from across the country should be used. On this basis, he claimed, the physical state of boys had clearly improved.<sup>39</sup> This position was more closely aligned to the conclusions of the Committee for Physical Deterioration which claimed there was no general, progressive degeneration, finding that the Director General's report of 1903 contained inadequate information to confirm a general degeneration, and referred to the great majority of witnesses from its own enquiry who did not support the contention of progressive physical deterioration.<sup>40</sup> In the West Country the concept of physical deterioration appeared less of an issue than in urban areas like Birmingham:<sup>41</sup>

In regard to the suggestion of physical deterioration, very strong statistics will be needed to convince the people we are on the downward grade so long as our most popular sports and pastimes are those which call for energy, alertness, and great physical resource.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 'Physical Degeneration,' *Morning Post*, 29 March 1904, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> *The Times*, 10 September 1903, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> 'Physical Deterioration,' *The Times*, 29 July 1904, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> See for instance claims that, 'the stature and girth of town dwellers, especially of the younger among them, compares very unfavourably with that of dwellers in the country,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 22 August 1904, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14 July 1903, p. 5.

So while in some quarters there was increasing concern over an apparent decline of the physical condition of the British race, particularly of adolescents, it is doubtful if this confirmed general degeneration.<sup>43</sup> Arguably it reflected wider worries about population increase and rapid urbanisation. Edwardians were becoming aware that statistical evidence was needed to accurately gauge the state of the nation's health, and plans were drafted by the British Association's Anthropometric Committee to measure heights and weights across the population.<sup>44</sup> But even though the medical and anthropometric communities lobbied for them to be accepted they were never endorsed, because no government was prepared to risk the perception that the state was meddling with people's bodies.<sup>45</sup> Elise Smith argues that although in the run-up to the First World War discussions about degeneracy declined in a wave of patriotism and jingoism, the subject retained its potency among the elite, as signalled by Herbert Fisher saying when introducing the 1917 Education Bill that while,

one of the great events in our social history is the establishment of the school medical service in 1907 ... the value of our educational system is impaired by the low physical conditions of a vast number of the children and how imperative is the necessity of raising the general standard of physical health among the children of the poor.<sup>46</sup>

The idea of sport providing a stimulus for healthy living was advocated by many commentators, notions supported by employers like Cadbury and Lever Brothers.<sup>47</sup> Arnold Freeman in his investigation of boy labour in Birmingham observed that in addition to food and sleep, there was a need to help youth undertake physical activity and boisterous exercise

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<sup>43</sup> An exposition of the conflicting views held in the early twentieth century came in a House of Lords debate in July 1903. 'The National Standard of Physical Health,' House of Lords, 6 July 1903, vol. 124, cols 1324-1356.

<sup>44</sup> For a review of the British Association's Anthropometric Committee drafted plans to measure thousands of citizens to establish the state of the national physique in 1904: Elise Juzda Smith, 'Class, Health and the Proposed British Anthropometric Survey of 1904,' *Social History of Medicine*, 28:2 (2015), pp. 308-329.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, 'Class, Health and the Proposed British Anthropometric Survey of 1904.'

<sup>46</sup> 'The Education Bill,' *The Times*, 11 August 1917, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Cadbury introduced compulsory physical training for all employees up to the age of eighteen, Michael Colin Rowlinson, *Cadbury's New Factory System 1879-1919* (PhD thesis, University of Aston, 1987), p. 207.

in the open air, which he held to be particularly important for adolescents.<sup>48</sup> Evidence to the Departmental Committee on Employment of Schoolchildren in 1902 included the recommendation that there should be ‘much more in the way of games,’ and that games should formally become a more regular part of after school activity.<sup>49</sup> This was a view reiterated at a meeting of the Devon and Exeter Medico-Chirurgical Society<sup>50</sup> which spoke of, ‘the importance of ... the organisation of games and physical exercise, when possible in the open air, but in sheds during wet weather.’<sup>51</sup> Historians have argued, however, that in late Victorian and Edwardian England sport remained a middle-class activity and substantially urban.<sup>52</sup> Mike Huggins notes that because of a lack of space and the cost of equipment most sport in towns and cities was primarily a spectator activity rather than participatory.<sup>53</sup> It was the unskilled and semi-skilled urban workers living in the slums some way from suburban space who had least opportunity to participate.<sup>54</sup> In the countryside, because of six-day working weeks and poor pay, little opportunity for sport existed beyond angling and occasional hunting, with the latter helping to support the household larder.<sup>55</sup> Urwick also shared the opinion that poor pay and lack of facilities were responsible for low participation rates among working-class boys,

They want, too, to play football and cricket, as the public-school boy does; and they are offered what -? For a hundred thousand of them to use as best they may, a couple of “wastes,” an expanse of undrained and unattended “flats” five miles away, a park or two on which a few hundred at most can play, and a payment in almost every case by way of rent far beyond the ordinary boy’s pocket. Every evening and every Saturday afternoon finds at least three-quarters of them loafing in the streets.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, pp. 97, 98.

<sup>49</sup> 1902. Employment of School Children Committee. Minutes of evidence taken before the Inter-Departmental Committee on Employment of School Children, with appendices and index [Cd.895] p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Formed in 1780 it was the second oldest society in the country. It provided an opportunity for medical practitioners to meet. For a fuller history see <<https://www.devonexetermedsoc.org/history>>.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Exeter Medical Opinion,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 10 March 1906, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Mike Huggins, *Victorians and Sport* (London: Hambledon, 2004), p. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Huggins, *Victorians and Sport*, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Huggins, *Victorians and Sport*, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Huggins, *Victorians and Sport*, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life*, p. 270.



Other factors also played a part in prompting concern over the physical wellbeing of the British people. The performance of the army in South Africa had been indifferent and new, mass-market newspapers like the *Daily Mail* launched in 1896 and with a circulation of over a million by 1900, had brought this to a wider audience.<sup>57</sup> *The Express* launched in 1900 and the *Daily Mirror* in 1903 also contributed to educating a wider audience about the war than was the case, for example, with the Crimean war less than fifty years earlier. The early industrial supremacy enjoyed by Britain was seen to be waning, confronted by the growing manufacturing strength of America and continental powers like Germany. Physical decline became a ready explanation for Britain's unsettling military and commercial position. While Urwick was ambivalent about physical deterioration, on the one hand accepting that some 'medical proof of degeneration is definite,' he was closer to the truth with his descriptions of philanthropists and irresponsible journalists exaggerating the level of concern.

The contribution of the emerging movement of eugenics within the social and political context of the early 1900s must also be understood. The definition of eugenics was given in 1909 by Karl Pearson a leading advocate of the movement. He described it 'as conscious race culture – a definite and enlightened attempt to free the human race from those elements which are dragging it down into degeneracy and inefficiency.'<sup>58</sup> In 1901, Labour leader Keir Hardie supported a parliamentary motion that called for the creation of a British Socialist Commonwealth and attacked private ownership for, among other things, the physical deterioration of workers.<sup>59</sup> The concept of socialism, however, was seen by some eugenicists as potentially contributing to the degeneration of the working classes through the influence of state-sponsored support services.<sup>60</sup> They believed that socialism in providing welfare, medical and insurance services, would upset a population's biological stability by preserving the unfit.

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<sup>57</sup> Ed King, *British Newspapers 1860-1900*, British Library Newspapers (Detroit: Gale, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> 'Summary of today's News,' *Western Morning News*, 26 February 1909, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup> 'From our London Correspondent,' *Western Morning News*, 28 March 1901, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> R. J. Halliday, 'Social Darwinism: A Definition' in *Victorian Studies*, 14:4 (1971), pp. 89-405.

In short, socialism contradicted natural law by limiting the scope of selection and competition.<sup>61</sup> That eugenics ran counter to socialist ideals was arguably conflicted, however, by the significant number of left-leaning members of the eugenics movement, both in its early years and in the inter-war period. It was argued that to control the physical and mental lifestyle of some members of society was not substantially different to the socialist concept of increasing control over other elements of society, like the means of production and the ownership of public services.<sup>62</sup> Others, sympathetic to the eugenics movement, also saw socialism as a powerful ally because of its potential to suppress the effects of capitalism which was seen as valuing success in terms of money and holding back the 'studious and moral.'<sup>63</sup> Socialism, they argued, would permit the development of social conditions which would provide equal opportunities for all and lead to the automatic and natural survival of the most valuable in society.<sup>64</sup>

The Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907 and while never having a membership of more than a few hundred it claimed among its initial number such luminaries as Julian Huxley, George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells; the last two also being members of the Fabian society. Social scientists Havelock Harris and William Beveridge also became members.<sup>65</sup> By 1914 the society had six branches, the largest of which was in Birmingham. Sidney Webb, in a Fabian pamphlet of 1907 wrote that, 'half, or perhaps two thirds' of children were being born to families of Irish Catholics, Russian and European Jews and to 'thriftless and irresponsible' casual labour and residents of single-room tenements.<sup>66</sup> This, he argued, was the way to national deterioration. Fears for the future of the population were summarised by William Inge, later dean of St Paul's Cathedral and a leading light in the Eugenics Society,

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<sup>61</sup> Halliday, 'Social Darwinism,' pp. 89-405.

<sup>62</sup> Halliday, 'Social Darwinism,' pp. 89-405.

<sup>63</sup> S. Herbert, 'Eugenics and Socialism,' *Eugenics Review*, 2:2 (1910), pp. 116-123. Herbert was a doctor and surgeon.

<sup>64</sup> S. Herbert, 'Eugenics and Socialism,' pp. 116-123.

<sup>65</sup> Frederick Hale, 'Debating the New Religion of Eugenics,' *The Heythrop Journal*, 52:3 (2011), pp. 445-457.

<sup>66</sup> Sidney Webb, 'The decline in the birth rate,' *Fabian Tract 131* (London: Fabian Society), pp. 16,17.

who warned that the slums of Britain were ‘breeding not vigorous barbarians but a new type of sub-men, abhorred by nature, and ugly as no natural product is ugly.’<sup>67</sup> Even eminent politicians and pre-First World War social reformers like Sir John Gorst supported the idea of improving the race, believing that one way in which physical deterioration might be arrested was by ‘preventing the marriage of persons physically and mentally unfit.’<sup>68</sup> In the inter-war period leading socialists saw significant value in the concept of eugenics, believing it to be solid and sensible, and William Beveridge argued that ‘those with general defects should be denied not only the vote, but civil freedom and fatherhood.’<sup>69</sup> Marie Stopes was also an ardent believer, arguing that effective birth control would strengthen the race in ‘preventing the birth of weak, diseased and otherwise undesirable people.’<sup>70</sup> Throughout the 1920s there was wider public interest in compulsory sterilisation, culminating in 1931 with a private members sterilisation bill.<sup>71</sup> Finally, in viewing the movement more directly from the perspective of youth, Hendrick has concluded that while ‘the eugenicists saw a special role for adolescence,’ seeing its proper development ‘as the agent of healthy propagation,’ it implied an element of control as propounded by the early twentieth-century author and medical journalist Caleb Saleeby.<sup>72</sup> Control, however, Hendrick concludes, was potentially limiting their ability to develop and act independently.<sup>73</sup>

The healthy propagation of youth was advocated by Arnold White, a member of the council of the Eugenics Education Society and an anti-Semite, who wrote about a maudlin philanthropic sentiment that inhibited education reform and that,

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<sup>67</sup> Cited by Frederick Hale, ‘Debating the New Religion of Eugenics.’

<sup>68</sup> *Western Times*, 22 August 1904, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> William Beveridge, *The Problem of the Unemployed* (London: Longmans, 1906), p. 327.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in: J. Welshman, ‘Eugenics and public health in Britain, 1900-40: Scenes from provincial life.’ *Urban History*, 24:1 (1997), pp. 56-75.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Overly, ‘Eugenics, sex and the state: an afterword.’ *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*. 39:2 (2008), pp. 270–272.

<sup>72</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 96.

<sup>73</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 97.

further, complete revision of our educational system is needed with the view, instead of decanting indigestible facts into brains unnourished by good red blood, of enforcing on boys and girls alike thorough physical (I might say military) training, and so creating a body of citizens not only fit to reproduce their kind, but to do their duty to themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Maurice Keatinge, Reader in education at the university of Oxford and author of 'Education and Eugenics' published in 1914, was critical of the lack of association between eugenics and education. Keatinge argued that, 'as a rule indeed the modern biologist asserts his disbelief in education as a biological factor.'<sup>75</sup> He referred to the views of several eugenicists who claimed that while education was important it had no impact on improving the race, as exemplified by an anonymous writer citing Galton: 'the kind of mind is irrevocably decided before the child is born. Hence the hopes held out of improving the race by education ... are illusory.'<sup>76</sup> This was a view supported by Dr Carveth Reid, lecturer in comparative psychology at University College London who claimed that regarding education, it 'can do no harm to mention that in the opinion of most biologists it does nothing to improve the breed.'<sup>77</sup> Keatinge, however, saw biological eugenics and education as potentially working together to achieve eugenicist objectives. He accepted that there were inherited characteristics, but through education there were also acquired qualities that led to the social handing down of the culture of one generation to the next. He warned that it was, 'because the true connexion between them is not realized that biologists depreciate the eugenical significance of the school.'<sup>78</sup> Keatinge concluded that it was by identifying and nurturing an individual's qualities that could be strengthened and society improved.<sup>79</sup> In summary it might be argued that the early eugenics

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<sup>74</sup> Arnold White, 'Eugenics and National Efficiency,' *Eugenics Review*, 1:2 (1909), pp. 105-111.

<sup>75</sup> M. W. Keatinge, 'Education and Eugenics,' *Eugenics Review*, 6:2 (1914), 97-115 (p. 98).

<sup>76</sup> Cited by Keatinge, 'Education and Eugenics,' p. 99.

<sup>77</sup> Cited by Keatinge, p. 100. An American study argued that heredity was a good indicator of a child's likelihood of 'feeble-mindedness,' and that no educational efforts could change the situation: Henry H. Goddard, 'The Bearing of Heredity Upon Educational Problems,' *Journal of Educational Psychology* 2:9 (1911), 491-497.

<sup>78</sup> Keatinge, 'Education and Eugenics,' p. 106.

<sup>79</sup> Keatinge, p. 115.

movement was conflicted between the concepts of nature and nurture, with the biological wing ultimately becoming dominant as demonstrated by the ideas for protecting the race described earlier, specifically the proposal to ban the procreation and social involvement of those deemed to be degenerate and inefficient.

Concerns about adolescence have been shown to have been widely held, particularly in the Edwardian period,<sup>80</sup> with reasons for perceived degeneration generally based on the increasing industrialisation of the country, the continuing movement of population into urban environs, adjustments to employment practices and the growing trap of blind-alley work for the unskilled.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, ‘first mover’ advantage in industrialisation was seen to be diminishing as other Powers, notably America and Germany, provided growing competition with, by the first decade of the twentieth century, both countries having a higher level of output per worker than Britain.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Britain’s investment in education was failing to match that of these two competitors with a spend of 1.3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared to 1.7 per cent in America and 1.9 per cent in Germany.<sup>83</sup> This relative poor performance of British education was acknowledged by Balfour in his introduction to the 1902 Education Act when he claimed that despite the vast expenditure on education, all be it ignoring the investment deficit compared to other countries, that the *ad hoc* structure of education up to that point had left Britain ‘behind all its Continental and American rivals in the matter of education.’<sup>84</sup> And finally, in addition to concerns over education and employment Britain had

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<sup>80</sup> Concerns continued throughout the 1920s, as exemplified by the eugenics movement and a 1926 study into the poor physical condition of working-class children in Scotland. This study concluded that maternal efficiency and heredity rather than poverty were the main causes for the small sizes of the young; cited in, Jane Lewis, ‘The Social History of Social Policy: Infant Welfare in Edwardian England,’ *Journal of Social Policy*, 9: 4 (1980), pp. 463-486 (p. 469).

<sup>81</sup> As referred to in chapter one, there was an increasing awareness of the status of children who were seen to be a ‘symbolic counterweight to the urbanised, pressurised, anarchic stresses of urban life and a civilisation felt to be in decline,’ *Childhood in Edwardian Fiction*, eds., Adrienne Gavin and Adrian Humphries (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

<sup>82</sup> Nicholas. F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 159.

<sup>83</sup> Crafts, p. 164.

<sup>84</sup> Balfour’s introduction to the 1902 Act, quoted in Maclure, *Educational Documents. England and Wales 1816-1963*, pp. 149-153 (p. 152).

experienced its first real military setback in nearly a century in South Africa. So, the search for an explanation for a perceived national decline was wide-ranging, particularly as it focused on education and the physical condition of the juvenile workforce.

Conversations concerning the causes of deterioration and degeneration in Edwardian Britain were, however, substantially those of the upper and middle-classes.<sup>85</sup> For the majority of the working population concerns were mainly jobs and accommodation, with their awareness of Britain as an imperial power unquestioned. The extravaganza of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations in 1897 had only confirmed that belief and it is arguable that creeping imperial decay, industrially and militarily, was not fully acknowledged until sometime after the First World War, or even the Second World War, as the Empire appeared broadly intact. So, while worries about a physical degeneration of the country were undoubtedly heightened across the late nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth, it appears now as it did to some contemporary observers, that these fears were overstated. More rational analysis of the perceived problem such as the 1904 Physical Deterioration report, highlighted the need for relatively straightforward measures to improve youthful health and conditions, including more sensible diets and increased exercise. Balfour's administration introduced the 1902 Education Act while the Liberal government of Henry Campbell-Bannerman, responding to the physical deterioration report introduced a number of reforms, notably the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906, the 1907 Open Spaces Act and the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act. Most significantly, Asquith's government embarked on a major reform programme, with Cyril Jackson's substantial Report on Boy Labour within the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws an example of the attention focused upon adolescents.

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<sup>85</sup> Inferring the problems were working-class; in South Devon it was claimed that the falling birth rate was a result of moral and physical degeneration, 'Notes in the West,' *Western Morning News*, 9 September 1908. p. 5. In Birmingham a report on physical deterioration by the health committee said that the main cause was alcohol, leading to hardship, misery, vice and crime. *Leamington Spa Courier*, 21 February 1908, p. 8.

## Chapter 3: Education, 1901-1914. National developments and regional implications

The sociologist Andrew Miles argues that improving education in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain had an effect on social mobility and that mobility increasingly came to be seen as a result of personal effort and not as part of a divine scheme.<sup>1</sup> He concludes that by 1914 education had created a more egalitarian society, but asserts that progress beyond the boundaries of the working-class was rare although movement within it, between skilled and unskilled, was not unusual.<sup>2</sup> Richard Zijdeman reasons that a wider analysis of industrialisation and urbanisation within a number of ‘past societies,’ shows it was the father’s occupation that increasingly impacted on mobility and it ‘was not influenced by educational expansion.’<sup>3</sup> In Chapter 6 of this study the influence of family in the employment choice of juveniles is confirmed as being important, although in Britain improved educational experience was also seen as becoming significant for an individual’s future prospects. Michael Childs has observed that, ‘the youth’s earlier experiences of education ... had wide repercussions on his subsequent career, particularly when he came to decide whether or not to continue into secondary or higher-grade education or to attend the evening schools.’<sup>4</sup>

The period 1901-1930, covered in this chapter and Chapter 5, is important because it falls between two unarguably important developments, the 1870 and the 1944 Education Acts.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by, Michael Sanderson, ‘Educational and Economic History: The Good Neighbours’ in, *Social Change in the History of British Education*, eds., Joyce Goodman and others (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 37. Full details of Miles’s analysis see, Andrew Miles, *Social Mobility in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). Reviews of this work broadly agree with its conclusions but question its narrowly defined study of occupational mobility, for example, Paul Johnson, ‘Reviewed Work: Social Mobility in Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century England,’ *The American Historical Review*, 106:1 (2001), pp. 262-263.

<sup>2</sup> Miles, *Social Mobility*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in, Marco H.D. van Leeuwen and Ineke Maas, ‘Historical Studies of Social Mobility and Stratification,’ *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36 (2010), pp. 429-451 (p. 437).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*, p. 28.

In this light, education development in the Edwardian era might be deemed somewhat fallow as submitted by Paul Thompson in *The Edwardians*. He justifies the minimal coverage he gives to education by claiming that, ‘education for instance – would have been given more attention had I been writing about a period in which their development was more critical.’<sup>5</sup> A different perspective is given by Roy Lowe in his analysis of education between 1900 and 1939, advocating that the period ‘witnessed equally significant transformations of the education system’ and, with particular reference to this thesis and its contrasting of urban and rural experiences that,

what was perhaps most significant is the ways in which educational developments reflected and echoed the social and economic changes of the period as well as the increasingly significant regional and local variations that were such a deep-seated feature of twentieth century life in Britain.<sup>6</sup>

The 1902 Education Act was one of those significant developments in delivering considerable change to the education landscape. The Act has been termed the most controversial proposal in the early twentieth century, drawing opposition from the Liberal party, the Labour movement and the National Union of Teachers (NUT).<sup>7</sup> The main thrust of the opposition was against the destruction of school boards, the preservation of the Anglican church’s influence through the continuance of voluntary church schools, and the failure to extend secondary education.<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of church schools on the rates was vigorously resisted in strong nonconformist areas, and the formation of the National Passive Resistance League led to a number of local councillors and clergymen being imprisoned, if only briefly,

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians; the Remaking of British Society* (St Albans: Paladin, 1977), p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Lowe, ‘Education, 1900-1939’ in ed., Chris Wrigley, *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 424.

<sup>7</sup> Roy Jenkins, quoted in; Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1965), p. 251. NUT conference report, ‘Teachers and the Bill,’ *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 1 April 1902, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Simon, *Education*, p. 224. Also Richard Aldrich, Dennis Dean, Peter Gordon, *Education and Policy in England in the Twentieth Century* (London: Woburn Press, 1991), p. 18.



for refusal to pay that portion of the rates allocated to schools.<sup>9</sup> Supporters of the Act, however, saw the move to fund all schools by public means as removing the disadvantage for many working-class children who had previously depended on voluntary schools funded by ‘money collected at jumble sales and ping-pong tournaments.’<sup>10</sup> Regarding rural education the act also had broad support from some on the left, including the Fabians as epitomised by Sidney Webb who described pre-1902 rural education as having been hated by landlords and farmers, ‘with all their hearts’ because of its charge on the local rates, and he claimed they had influenced ‘unprogressive’ school boards.<sup>11</sup> Many socialists, however, decried the destruction of school boards which they saw as reflecting open, direct and local democracy as opposed to centralised bureaucracy.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the Act was widely seen as a step towards closing the disparity between urban and rural schools through the wider county rating system and the introduction of more professional administration.<sup>13</sup> This was achieved through local education authorities (LEAs), established by county and borough councils working to schemes approved by the government’s Education Department.<sup>14</sup> The LEAs were mandated to coordinate secondary and primary education and to address the lack of trained teachers; fifty-five per cent of all teachers at the turn of the century having no formal training.<sup>15</sup> LEA committees established to oversee education administration were required, ‘to include persons experienced in education and acquainted with the needs of the various kinds of schools in the area.’<sup>16</sup> Reflecting the controversial nature of the act, the NUT were against proposals to establish one authority for all education but it was backed by the Head Teachers’ Association, although they refused to

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Passive Resistance To Go On,’ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 1908, p. 4. ‘Cheltenham Passive Resisters,’ *Cheltenham Chronicle* 14 September 1912, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons, *House of Commons Debate* (24 March 1902, vol 105, col. 813-968).

<sup>11</sup> Sidney Webb, ‘The Education Act, 1902: how to make the best of it,’ *Fabian Tract*, 114 (London: Fabian Society, 1903), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin Manton, *Socialism and Education in Britain 1883-1902* (London: Woburn Press, 2001), pp. 2, 170.

<sup>13</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, p. 257.

<sup>14</sup> For additional details of the impact of the 1902 Education Act in Devon, see: Roger Sellman, *Devon Village Schools in the nineteenth century* (Newton Abbott: Newton and Charles, 1967), pp. 148-152.

<sup>15</sup> House of Commons, *House of Commons Debate* (24 March 1902 vol 105, col 813-968).

<sup>16</sup> House of Commons, 1902 (vol 105, col 813-968).

support the idea that appointment and dismissal of teachers should be in the hands of local authorities on the basis that dismissal might be ‘capricious’ on religious grounds.<sup>17</sup> One objective of the act, to unify primary and secondary education, was not fully achieved. Moves to improve secondary education, particularly as it faced challenges in rural communities with small populations and teacher shortfalls, had to be addressed again by the 1918 Education Act, and as explored in Chapter 5 through subsequent committee reports in the 1920s. Nevertheless, regulations introduced in 1907 stipulating that all secondary schools in receipt of Board of Education (BOE) grants had to provide free places for twenty-five per cent of their annual intake, represented a significant change, and by 1913 there were 60,000 scholarships rising to 150,000 by 1927.<sup>18</sup>

Education’s role was increasingly important as a changing, industrialising work-place demanded new skills, bringing pressures to bear on the role of schooling.<sup>19</sup> For example, between 1851 and 1891 the number of jobs for which male literacy was necessary, or expected to be so, rose from 28.4 per cent to 37.2 per cent, figures likely to have increased further as industrialisation progressed, but it also became important even for more mundane employment like postmen.<sup>20</sup> While Thompson might question the quality of educational reform, much has nevertheless been written about it both by contemporaries and more recent historians, many of whom are referred to in this chapter and Chapter 7. Detail is, however, less available for specific regions and as Lowe observes, there were ‘significant and local variations’ in how it was shaped. This chapter addresses that issue by looking at the county of Devon, together with

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Teachers’ partial approval,’ *Western Times* 3 January 1903, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Maclure, *Educational Documents*, p. 162.

<sup>19</sup> In Devon the debate is described in an Exeter lecture under the auspices of the National Union of Women Workers. See ‘Care of Children,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 24 February 1914, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Sanderson, *Education and economic decline in Britain*, p. 8.

the boroughs within its geographic area, to observe how they adopted national reform and enacted it in a way that reflected the local environment.<sup>21</sup>

It is worth briefly considering the reaction to the 1902 Education Act by some of the relevant bodies. Exeter County Borough's main concern about elementary schools was that rates might need to rise by 5d as a result of its new responsibility for accommodating existing voluntary schools, because in Exeter there were more of them than Board Schools.<sup>22</sup> The council recognised some positive aspects of the act but with little enthusiasm, although the official position was to work constructively and not to frustrate its implementation. Across Devon, however, anti-act rallies throughout 1904 and 1905 reflected antagonism to the perceived influence of the Anglican Church and the hold of a conservative elite to the detriment of liberals and nonconformists.<sup>23</sup> In February 1903 the County Council Association met with the Local Government Board and the Department of Education to seek government loans to cover councils' working capital requirements when taking on responsibility of voluntary schools' properties. Devon County Council was represented by Lord Clifford, later chairman of the Devon Education Committee. The concession they obtained was for the annual parliamentary grant to councils to be paid quarterly in advance rather than annually at the end of the school year. The Association confirmed that councils were generally sympathetic to the new act but drew attention to opposition which implied that hostility was politically motivated so as to damage the government in the light of forthcoming elections.<sup>24</sup> Comment in liberal newspapers, like the *Western Times*, suggested that in due course the 'falsity' of opposition arguments would be exposed by the successful working of the act. As to expressions of

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<sup>21</sup> For a wider understanding of the development of rural elementary education in the nineteenth century and the years leading up to the First World War see, Pamela Horne, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> 'Position of Exeter' *Western Times*, 19 January 1902, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> David Parker, *Edwardian Devon 1900-1914* (Stroud: the History Press, 2016), p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> 'The Education Act' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 12 February 1903, and 'Our London Letter' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* 1 January 1903, p. 3. This paper reflected 'establishment' views.

criticism, Devon County Council recognised that while ‘agriculture had not been specifically mentioned ... they did not forget it was one of the principle industries of the county.’<sup>25</sup>

Before looking at the specifics of education in Devon, Table 3.1 shows the county’s population size, and that of its boroughs, together with the size of local education authority areas compared to those of other rural counties, and urban Birmingham. The statistics illustrate the changes in population size between 1901 and 1911 and confirm that urban and semi-urban growth was generally more pronounced than that for rural areas. Low and declining rural growth was an issue in the debate about the viability of many rural schools, as explored later in the chapter.

**Table 3.1.** Populations in Devon and selected other Counties and Boroughs<sup>26</sup>

	1901	1911	
Devon County Council	371,762	383,424	(+3%)
Barnstable Borough	14,137	14,485	(+2.5%)
Tiverton Borough	10,382	10,205	(-1.7%)
Torquay Borough	33,625	38,771	(+15%)
Plymouth County Borough	107,636	112,030	(+4%)
Devonport County Borough	70,347	81,678	(+16%)
Exeter County Borough	54,217	59,092	(+9%)
Kent County Council	483,264	523,252	(+8%)
Gloucestershire C.C.	272,003	280,072	(+3%)
Norfolk County Council	291,027	301,532	(+3.4%)
Cumberland C.C.	170,932	169,385	(-1%)
Birmingham County Borough	759,063	840,202	(+10.7%)

Education beyond primary school, as described in both official reports and newspaper commentary, was generally unwelcome in many country districts. Farmers thought what was taught did not make boys effective labourers. In addition, it was believed compulsory education upset the flow of boy labour into agriculture and that education merely encouraged the drift

<sup>25</sup> ‘Education Schemes,’ *Western Times*, 23 February 1903, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Board of Education (henceforth BOE), Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Educational statistics, 1913-14 [Cd 8097] pp. 4, 6, 10.

into towns and cities. There was also a conflict of interests between what many parents wanted from education for their children (a good educational grounding) and what farmers believed was in their own economic interests. The 1893-1894 Royal Commission on Labour appeared to support the contention that education encouraged young workers to leave for towns and cities, citing the population decline in twenty of the thirty parishes of the Crediton Poor Law Union in Devon: 'young men leave the land for other employment, young women flock to Exeter, and only old men and cripples are left.'<sup>27</sup> By 1907 there was consensus that teaching in 'the great majority of village schools' was unsuccessful in stimulating practical interest in older pupils.<sup>28</sup> Several government reports referred to the issue, including one by the BOE in 1902, which found that while schools had no role in teaching technical issues relating to agriculture, bad teaching could discourage interest in country life. A report in 1902 from the Employment of School Children Committee referred to evidence that advised, 'education in rural schools has often been of a character which tends to make the children indisposed for agricultural pursuits, and to encourage the influx to the towns.'<sup>29</sup> Referring specifically to Devon, a 1906 report on agricultural population decline concluded; that 'the system of education is deemed unsuitable, and town life, with its absence of Sunday work and opportunities of enjoyment, exercises a great attraction.'<sup>30</sup>

By 1902, in the West Country as a whole there were significant educational advances although mainly in the major conurbations rather than in rural communities, with agricultural decline making it difficult for country parishes to pay for schools.<sup>31</sup> As the BOE report for 1910-1911 acknowledged, there was an 'increasing difference between schools in one area and

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<sup>27</sup> Royal Commission on Labour. The agricultural labourer. 1893-94 Vol. I. England. Part II. [C.6894-II] p. 91

<sup>28</sup> Michael Ernest Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1907), pp. 120,121.

<sup>29</sup> Employment of School Children Committee. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, appointed by H.M. Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. 1902 [Cd. 849] p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Report on the Decline in the Agricultural Population of Great Britain, 1881-1906 [Cd.3273] p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, p. 257.

those in another, especially between town and country schools,<sup>32</sup> and the Board's report for 1911-1912 described how rural schools were significantly smaller than those in semi-urban and urban areas.<sup>33</sup> In the Devon County Council region, the total number of schools and departments<sup>34</sup> within public elementary school<sup>35</sup> totalled 648, with seventy-two per cent of those departments/schools having average attendances below one hundred.<sup>36</sup> In comparison the number of pupils in the major towns was almost exactly the reverse. In Devonport only eleven per cent of departments averaged *less* than one hundred pupils, in Exeter twenty-one per cent, and in Plymouth seven per cent. For further rural perspective the percentage in Kent was forty-eight, Gloucestershire sixty-five and in Herefordshire eighty-six.<sup>37</sup> In Birmingham the figure was just three per cent. The BOE's report for 1909 acknowledged that rural schools often had too few of pupils to provide separate classes for different age groups and that different years were often grouped together in one classroom with a single teacher, with the age range potentially being between five and sixteen.<sup>38</sup> In some cases, to ease the problem of ineffective teaching, the answer was to run 'half-day' schools which younger children only attended for part of the day, but it was concluded that this solution was a 'condition decidedly unfavourable to educational progress.'<sup>39</sup>

The Rural Education Conference in June 1912 discussed the idea of merging smaller schools and considered the motion, 'with a view to improving the education given in

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<sup>32</sup> BOE, report for 1910-1911. [Cd 6116] p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> The impact of rural depopulation in late Victorian and early twentieth century England, reflected by falling rural school rolls is touched upon by, Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 272,273.

<sup>34</sup> The definition of a 'department' was, 'a portion of a school which normally has a separate Head Teacher,' [Cd. 8097] p. 191.

<sup>35</sup> 'Under the Act of 1902 a Public Elementary School must ... be maintained by the Local Education Authority.' BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Educational statistics, 1913-14 [Cd 8097] p. 190.

<sup>36</sup> In all BOE reports they refer to 'the total number of Departments of ordinary Public Elementary Schools.' This is best described by wording in its 1909-1910 report [Cd. 5616] p. 13, 'Schools of all types-from the village school with 40 children of all ages to the large town department for 400 or more.'

<sup>37</sup> BOE. Public elementary schools in England and Wales. Tabular statement showing, for the area of each local education authority for elementary education in England and Wales, the number of departments of ordinary public elementary schools with an average attendance not exceeding 100. 1914 [Cd. 7214].

<sup>38</sup> BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Educational statistics, 1913-14 [Cd 8097] p. 190.

<sup>39</sup> BOE, report for 1908-1909 [Cd.5130].

Elementary Schools in rural districts, to suggest that the “tops” or parts of the tops of such Schools should in selected areas and as an experiment be consolidated.’<sup>40</sup> This meant that either all the children from several elementary schools be consolidated into one central school, or only selected older children be sent to a central school to give ‘them some special form of teaching connected with rural life.’<sup>41</sup> While recognising the potential challenges involved, not least opposition from teachers and parents, the conference concluded that the BOE should allocate sufficient sums to allow for an experiment in rural consolidation.<sup>42</sup> The size of the challenge is highlighted when considering the number of elementary schools there were in Devon and the County Boroughs, together with comparative data from a number of other rural counties, as shown in Table 3.2. The average number of pupils in rural schools was substantially lower than those in urban or semi-urban schools, with the smallest number of all in those schools controlled by Devon County Council. Birmingham is included in the table to provide comparative figures.

**Table 3.2.** The number of schools and average attendances, 1913-14.<sup>43</sup>

	Elementary Schools	Avg. Attendance	Avg. per school
Devon County Council	542	52,279	96
Barnstable Borough	11	1913	174
Tiverton Borough	8	1221	153
Torquay Borough	16	3704	232
Plymouth County Borough	28	16,350	584
Devonport County Borough	20	11,483	574
Exeter County Borough	25	7,707	308
Birmingham	181	130,852	723
Norfolk	405	47,985	118
Kent	447	74,610	167
Gloucestershire	395	41,586	105
Cumberland	219	26,686	122

<sup>40</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and BOE. Report of the rural education conference on the consolidation of rural elementary schools [Cd 6055] p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Rural Education Conference 1912, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Rural Education Conference 1912, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Educational statistics, 1913-14 [Cd. 8097] p. 36.

One explanation for the low average attendances in Devon schools is because pupils living in the Devon County education authority areas sometimes registered in neighbouring borough and county borough schools. This was because there were growing areas of population within the county council area that were unable to provide for the number of children requiring a place. But there is also evidence that even children from areas having adequate provision were going to city schools, as substantiated by a letter from Devon County Council education authority to neighbouring Plymouth confirming that Devon was prepared to compensate borough councils but only where it could be shown there was no accommodation available in county schools.<sup>44</sup> Correspondingly, the lack of facilities lay behind a positive response from Devon County education sub-committee to an invoice from the City of Exeter Education Authority in respect of children from the Heavitree district attending schools in the city when it resolved to recommend that the account be passed, 'subject to slight amendment.'<sup>45</sup> The need for additional facilities in Heavitree was rectified in 1907 when the County Council began work on a new elementary school for 700 pupils, and it might be assumed payment for Heavitree pupils in Exeter ceased.<sup>46</sup>

Michael Sadler, in 1907, observed of education provision in rural districts that, 'the children receive a good deal of bookish instruction which they are not able to take in or profit from.'<sup>47</sup> And he concluded that it 'would be a mistake to give the course of study too utilitarian a cast,' something that would fail to stimulate their imagination and understanding of wider scientific and practical issues.<sup>48</sup> Sadler believed that improvement in rural education would not

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<sup>44</sup> Devon County Education Committee, Elementary Education Sub-Committee. June 1906 (Exeter, Devon Records Office, 1037M/LG/3/7 ), p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Devon County Education Committee. Accounts Sub-Committee, January 1906 (Exeter, Devon Records Office, 1037M/LG/3/7), p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 4 February 1907, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Michael E Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere*, p.122. Michael Sadler was the director for the Office of Special Inquiries and Reports. In his time, it produced a series of eleven volumes known as the *Special Reports on Educational Subjects*. He had been professor of education at Manchester University and vice-chancellor of Leeds. He was a contributor to the early development of comparative studies in education.

<sup>48</sup> Sadler, p. 123.



be forthcoming unless central government provided a greater percentage of the cost. In 1899, and perhaps indicative of the lack of relevant instruction, sixteen schools in Devon had attendance records of less than sixty-five per cent, and thirty-four schools less than seventy per cent.<sup>49</sup> Nationally, the average attendance figure was eighty-one per cent, which still meant that every day around one million pupils were absent.<sup>50</sup>

The need to make rural education relevant was recognised by the regular presentation of a bill between 1904 and 1914 with the aim of defining agricultural subjects as compulsory topics for teaching in rural and semi-rural elementary schools. A voluntary move in this direction was taken by 'a very large number of County Education Authorities' who introduced gardening and light woodwork for boys before 1913.<sup>51</sup> Pupils were said to find manual instruction 'definitely useful' with a consequence that boys were more adaptable for work after school,<sup>52</sup> and it was recommended that county education authorities should introduce manual subjects into all rural elementary schools.<sup>53</sup> This was subsequently supported by the BOE.<sup>54</sup>

The standard curriculum for boys in Plymouth elementary schools was English (reading, recitation, writing, composition and grammar), arithmetic, drawing, 'object lessons on geography ... history and common things,' singing by note and physical training.<sup>55</sup> For non-academic boys, classes were provided in manual instruction. Significant numbers were enrolled in these manual classes with 1,948 Plymouth boys over the age of twelve being eligible in 1904 for a similar syllabus to that produced by county councils, because it was recognised that 'manual instruction has frequently helped backward boys to general improvement.'<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>49</sup> 'Occasional Notes' *North Devon Journal*, 4 January 1900, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> 'North Devon Teachers' Association' *North Devon Journal*, 1 February 1900, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and BOE. Several report of the rural education conference. Manual instruction in rural elementary schools and the individual examination of children in rural elementary schools [Cd. 6571] p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and BOE [Cd.6571] pp. 4,5.

<sup>53</sup> Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and BOE [Cd.6571] pp. 4,5.

<sup>54</sup> BOE. Report for 1908-1909. [Cd.5130] p. 122.

<sup>55</sup> Plymouth Education Committee, (henceforth PEC), 7 March 1904 (Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, 1644/110), p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> PEC, 7 March 1904, p. 20.

total number of pupils aged five and over on the city's register remained reasonably stable across the first decade of the century with 18,078 registered in 1901 and 18,815 in 1903, the numbers remaining almost static through to 1910.<sup>57</sup> On the same basis average attendance also remained constant at around 15,000, or just over eighty per cent. The number of boy absentees from school in Plymouth ran at between 250 and 300 per month with the figures in Table 3.3 taken from one month in 1909. With minor variations the numbers and categories are reasonably representative of a wider timescale.

**Table 3.3.** Reasons for absence (boys), May 1909.<sup>58</sup>

Total	277
Sick	116
Death in Family	1
Out of Town	1
Want of boots or clothing	7
Difficult domestic circumstances	17
Truant	11
Parental neglect	54
Unknown	69

On average, boys made up slightly less than fifty per cent of all absences, with the pressure on girls to help with domestic issues probably explaining the difference.

Between 1900 and 1907 there were moves to improve access to free secondary education, but by 1911 there was still no formal definition of the age at which pupils should move from elementary education. In practice the views and recommendations of elementary school head teachers generally determined when pupils moved from one level to the next.<sup>59</sup> The BOE nevertheless described the position as delivering 'a great diversity in educational theory and practice.'<sup>60</sup> Devon County Council expressed concern that to provide secondary

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<sup>57</sup> PEC, 7 March 1904, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> PEC, 8 June 1909 (Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, 1644/115), p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> BOE, report for 1911-1912 [Cd 6707] p. 23.

<sup>60</sup> BOE, report 1911-1912, p. 6.

education would lead them into ‘very great expense’ and discussed with private schools the possibility of them submitting to BOE inspection and for the formal registration of their teachers, thus negating the necessity for new public secondary schools.<sup>61</sup> More widely, in 1907 it was made mandatory for twenty-five per cent of places in state-aided secondary schools to ‘be open without payment of a fee to scholars from public elementary schools who apply for admission;’ the eligible age-group defined as twelve to eighteen.<sup>62</sup> Because of the costs involved in buying books, and in rural areas having to pay train fares to get to a secondary school, most local education authorities included some form of allowances in addition to the cost of providing free education.<sup>63</sup> The proportion of pupils nationally enjoying free secondary education in 1911-12 was nearly thirty-five per cent, although the figures by individual counties varied significantly.<sup>64</sup> In 1909, the proportion of girls to boys with free secondary school places was almost equal, with fifty-two per cent held by boys and forty-eight per cent by girls.<sup>65</sup>

To encourage applications from younger pupils for free places at secondary schools, Plymouth Education Authority in assessing candidates gave added percentage marks for each month the pupil fell under the age of thirteen.<sup>66</sup> The rationale being that to progress in secondary education the learning of many subjects, including foreign languages, should be started early, probably no later than the age of twelve.<sup>67</sup> In 1905, Exeter had more children as a percentage of the population in public and private secondary education than any other city in the country, although the absolute numbers were relatively small. There were 526 boys and 648 girls of which 174 of the boys and 276 girls were in private secondary schools.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> ‘Higher Education,’ *Western Times*, 18 December 1903, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> BOE, report 1911-1912, p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> BOE, 1911-1912, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> BOE, 1911-1912, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> BOE, 1911-1912, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> BOE, 1911-1912, p. 21.

<sup>67</sup> BOE, 1911-1912, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> M. E. Sadler, *Exeter Education Committee, Report on Secondary and Higher Education in Exeter* (Exeter: The Committee, 1905), p. 5.

For the years, 1909-1912, the average time spent by free place pupils, nationally, beyond the age of twelve in secondary education was three years and two months, while for those who paid fees it was two years and six months.<sup>69</sup> From this one can infer that strained family budgets meant fee-paying children often stopped education to begin contributing to household income.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, while there had not been a significant increase in new admissions to grant schools (those having to offer a minimum of twenty-five per cent free places), the number of pupils in education within specific age groups had increased because of ‘an increase in the length of school life.’<sup>71</sup> In 1909 the BOE published its first list of schools deemed to be ‘efficient secondary schools.’<sup>72</sup> The definition being that schools had satisfied inspectors as to their academic qualities and also to ‘the influences brought to bear upon the characters and the corporate life of the pupils.’<sup>73</sup> The stipulated age range catered for had to cover those twelve to sixteen or seventeen, with suitable provision made for those under twelve. A school was not accepted as ‘efficient’ if the majority of its scholars studied for less than four years.

There were exceptions made for rural secondary schools, which would have included all of Devon County’s institutions, in that pupils could leave at fifteen and efficiency was consequently measured by pupils studying for three rather than four years.<sup>74</sup> Devon County was broadly comparable to other rural counties in its number of efficient secondary schools per head of population; the comparison shown in Table 3.4. Where a significant difference appeared was in the proportion of boys’ secondary schools against those for girls. Other rural

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<sup>69</sup> BOE, report for 1912-1913 [Cd.7341] pp. 104,105.

<sup>70</sup> The TUC noted in 1916 that people could not afford secondary education. It was not the fees, but ‘other items associated with the schools,’ that stood in the way of parents sending their children to secondary schools. TUC Annual Report, 1916, p. 371.

<sup>71</sup> BOE, report for 1912-1913, p. 105.

<sup>72</sup> The report made clear that it was not an exhaustive list of secondary schools and that there were others that had applied for inspection.

<sup>73</sup> BOE, list of secondary schools in England recognised as efficient with a list of recognised pupil-teacher centres 1908 [Cd 4374] p. ii.

<sup>74</sup> BOE, 1908, p. 3.

administrative counties were fairly balanced between the two sexes but Devon was heavily biased in favour of boys.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 3.4.** Number of efficient secondary schools in Devon and selected rural counties, 1908.

	Boys Schools	Girls	Mixed	One school per 000 population
Devon	11	2	-	30,000
Norfolk	5	-	2*	43,000
Kent	11	9	7**	19,000
Gloucestershire	3	2	6	25,000
Cumberland	2	1	4	24,000

\* The mixed schools were effectively girls' schools because they had only single attendance figures for boys; all under the age of twelve.

\*\* Each of the mixed schools had less than seven boys against over 100 girls.

It was observed that the attraction of certain jobs, including the increasingly important motor trade and low grade clerical work with its appeal of reasonable wages, had made it increasingly difficult to retain pupils over the age of fourteen.<sup>76</sup>

Alongside the development of secondary education was the issue of continuation schools. Following the Education Act of 1870 there was argument about whether or not school boards could legally pay for evening schools out of the school board rate, or whether they should be excluded as being part of higher education. A legal ruling supported by the Court of Appeal in 1901, the Cockerton Judgement, confirmed that science and art teaching consisting of higher mathematics, advanced chemistry, political economy, art, French, German and history, was not within the scope of state-aided elementary education, although it was allowable where its funding was provided by sources from outside the rates.<sup>77</sup> The 1902 Education Act

<sup>75</sup> BOE, list of secondary schools in England recognised as efficient with a list of recognised pupil-teacher centres 1908 [Cd 4374] pp. 12,13

<sup>76</sup> BOE, report for 1911-1912, 20 [Cd.6760] p. 72.

<sup>77</sup> M. E. Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1907), p. 65.

clarified the position in unifying all aspects of education under the auspices of county and county borough councils. The act stated that elementary education was usually to be limited to ‘scholars who, at the close of the school year, will not be more than sixteen years of age,’ and that local education authorities could supply ‘any education, except where that education is given at a public elementary school.’<sup>78</sup>

An early attempt to take advantage of this freedom to provide ‘any’ education was by a grouping of Devon County Council, Exeter Council and the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. They proposed that a specialist department for teaching commercial education be attached to an existing school in Exeter, providing places for fifty boys over the age of thirteen, at ten guineas a year, which would teach ‘clerkage and accountancy.’<sup>79</sup> Targets were boys not progressing to university and to provide commerce with suitably trained apprentices. The 1902 Act thus clearly delineated the difference between elementary day schools and higher education, including evening continuation schools, and confirmed that council control allowed both to be paid for from the rates. PEC minutes from 1903 noted three Government codes under which schools were recognised for grants; ‘Public Elementary Schools and Training Colleges, Secondary Day Schools and Evening Schools.’<sup>80</sup>

One issue was that many pupils who left elementary education but later enrolled in an evening school had lost an appreciable amount of knowledge previously gained in day school.<sup>81</sup> As a result a ‘preparatory division’ of subjects was recognised for evening classes and the veto removed from teaching, among other subjects, reading, writing and arithmetic.<sup>82</sup> In the Devon Council region it was recorded in 1906 that ‘the three Rs are by far the most, general, useful

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<sup>78</sup> Education Act, 1902, Chapter 42, p. 137.

<sup>79</sup> ‘A new Scheme drafted for Exeter,’ *Western Times*, 3 February 1903, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Plymouth Education Authority, Education Committee minutes, 6 July 1903 (Plymouth and West Devon records, 1644/109), p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> M. E. Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1907), p. 69.

<sup>82</sup> Meeting of Devon County Council, June 1906 (Exeter, Devon Records Office, 1037/M/LG/3/7), p. 11.

and attractive subjects.’ Other lessons widely provided included woodwork and woodcarving, drawing, needlework, geography, mensuration (fertilisers) and elementary science.<sup>83</sup> In total, 180 evening schools and classes were established in the Devon County Council area in the year 1905-1906 with over seventy per cent of pupils being male.<sup>84</sup> By 1909, the biggest group attending evening education in Devon was fifteen to sixteen year olds and from the total number of students, 5,689 had previously attended elementary school and 574 had been to secondary schools.<sup>85</sup> It should be noted, however, that only 406 students had any part of their fees paid. If any difference can be identified between evening class education in the Devon County Council area and elsewhere in the country it is that while the most valued of the classes in Devon were the three r’s which were in essence refresher classes for day school subjects, elsewhere in the country a majority of students studied technical subjects, more reflective of lower-middle-class aspiration.<sup>86</sup> In Plymouth evening schools, the subjects taught were mainly ‘literary and commercial, art and manual instruction.’<sup>87</sup> The lowest level of instruction, those subjects in the preparatory category, was given in a term stretching from the first Monday in October to the second week in March. Each course cost 1s. (approximately £5.10 at 2018 equivalent)<sup>88</sup> for one or two subjects with an additional 6d. for each additional subject.<sup>89</sup> 1516 Plymouth students, of whom 586 were boys under nineteen, enrolled for intermediate and preparatory evening schools for the term starting in October 1904.<sup>90</sup> In Devonport 343 boys enrolled and in Exeter 463.<sup>91</sup> As already noted, Devon County Council recognised that the 1902 Education Act did not address the issue of agricultural teaching which was clearly important

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<sup>83</sup> Devon County Council, June 1906, p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Part I. Educational statistics, 1908-9 [Cd 5355] Table 98, p. 222.

<sup>86</sup> Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere*, p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> PEC, 6 July 1903 (Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, 1644/109), p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> Measuring Worth.com.

<sup>89</sup> PEC, 7 September 1903 (Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, 1644/109), p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> PEC, 5 December 1903 (Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, 1644/111), p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Part I. Educational statistics, 1908-9 [Cd 5355] Table 93, p. 202.

for the rural county, but in addition to evening schools, small continuation schools and classes were eligible for government grants and several schools and classes for agricultural instruction were established in the county.<sup>92</sup> See Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5.** Subjects for agricultural instruction and the number of centres given for their teaching in Devonshire, 1908-1909.<sup>93</sup>

Subjects	No., of centres
Manures (fertilizers)	15
Management of stock	1
Sheep- shearing	31
Ploughing	7
Hedging and ditching	8
Thatching	9
Horticulture	16
Fruit cultures	16

In summary, Devon County and neighbouring boroughs reflected most of the problems identified in BOE reports for the first dozen or so years of the twentieth century, especially those highlighting the challenges for rural schools. Those who propose that nothing of real note occurred in educational development between the late nineteenth century and the 1940s have arguably underestimated the impact of the 1902 Act and indeed the subsequent Act of 1918 which is discussed in Chapter 5. The significant challenges presented to new local education authorities in taking over responsibilities from the old school boards, and the implementation of the wider county rating system which helped close the gap between rural and urban education, in addition to subsequent moves for more widely available secondary schooling, were as important as any previous reform. Rural authorities like Devon faced unique issues

<sup>92</sup> BOE. Statistics of public education in England and Wales. Part I. Educational statistics, 1908-9. p. lvii. [Cd. 5355].

<sup>93</sup> BOE. Educational statistics, 1908-9 [Cd. 5355] Table 97, p. 220. See also local report of a joint proposal by the Boards of Agriculture and Education to improve and extend specialised instruction for all agricultural training. *Western Morning News*, 29 September 1909, p. 4.



including dispersed rural populations and small school sizes, and also the lure of cities and towns for juveniles in preference to continuing their formal education. The county also had an obligation to please parental requirements by providing a good education for their children while at the same time satisfying local, substantially agricultural employment needs. The move towards delivering more widely available secondary education in both rural Devon and the county boroughs, together with the organisation of evening schools with programmes that reflected varied local requirements, was also ‘one of special difficulty.’<sup>94</sup> The comparison between rural Devon County Council schools and those in urban Plymouth and Exeter also showed fundamental differences, not least in the size of schools and the subjects taught.

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<sup>94</sup> Sadler, *Continuation Schools in England and Elsewhere*, p. 209.

## Chapter 4: Early age employment, 1901-1914

The compulsory age for remaining in education was not raised to fourteen until 1918, but the Edwardian period reflected reformers' efforts to address the dual challenges of eliminating early school leaving and the unreasonable working hours that existed for many boys under fourteen. The 1902 Education Act and the 1903 Employment of Children Act were both significant steps in this direction, as were the influence of later reports including the 1909 Boy Labour Report as part of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter shows that the number of boys under the age of fourteen who were formally working had fallen significantly by the start of the twentieth century, influenced by a series of education acts since 1870, and declined further during the first decade. There was also a fall in the number of adolescents, identified as those aged between fourteen and nineteen, as a percentage of the population, beginning in the Victorian period and slowly accelerating across the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1901 the adolescent group represented 15.4 per cent of the *total* population of England and Wales, declining to 14 per cent in 1911.<sup>2</sup> The fall was correspondingly reflected in the percentage they represented of the *working* population where the adolescent group fell from 20.3 per cent to 18.6 per cent. The wider working group, beginning at the age of ten, dropped from 21.8 per cent to 19.5 per cent, figures that confirm a relatively greater fall in those under fourteen.<sup>3</sup>

In certain trades and industries younger boys, aged ten to fourteen, remained a significant presence and this chapter focuses on this group by considering the impact of state

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<sup>1</sup> For a contemporary summary of boy labour as it existed in 1909: F W. Baggallay, 'Child Labour in Factories and Workshops,' *The Economic review*, 19:3 (1909), pp. 293-308.

<sup>2</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 260.

and local government intervention on the education and employment of younger boys, nationally, and in Devon and Birmingham.

The period between 1870 and 1914 was one of decline in the British economy, confirmed by contemporary observers and government reports.<sup>4</sup> A number of historians believe that the quality and amount of technical education was inferior to, for example Germany, a line often promoted by contemporary industrialists and politicians to effectively pass the blame for economic decline onto the education system.<sup>5</sup> Other historians cited by Michael Sanderson have a different perspective, claiming that the British way of training was not via educational institutions but rather on site and often through apprenticeships.<sup>6</sup> The benefit being that young workers embarked on a path to future skilled employment while employers enjoyed the advantages of a workforce trained on the job and not in a class-room. The challenge to this line of thought, as explored in Chapter 7, is that only a small number of young workers began apprenticeships, and even taking a wider perspective of industrial training to include that given to young workers, for example in machine-based manufacturing, it still left a majority of juvenile workers potentially lacking both school-based education and workplace training. They remained in low skilled, blind-alley employment, including agricultural labouring, messengering, warehouse work and the growing service trades of retail and leisure.<sup>7</sup>

The figure of the boy labourer coloured much of the discussion around blind-alley employment in the early twentieth century in addition to interesting more recent observers.<sup>8</sup> Many descriptions of blind-alley exist but the summary in the minority report of the 1909 Poor Law Commission puts it succinctly. They identified it as being occupations in which employees ‘earn wages sufficient to make them independent of parental control and disinclined for the

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Sanderson, ‘Educational and Economic History: The Good Neighbours’ in *Social Change in the History of British Education*, eds., Joyce Goodman, Gary McCulloch and William Richardson (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Derek Aldcroft, Martin Weiner, Correlli Barnett, Gordon Roderick and Michael Stephens.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Nicholas and Roderick Floud.

<sup>7</sup> TNA. LAB 2/822/ED34364/2017. 1919 Ministry of Labour report into juveniles in employment.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Grey, *Entry to the Labour Market in Victorian and Edwardian Britain*,.

lower wages of apprenticeships and workshops, and whence, if they remain, they are excluded when they come to manhood.’<sup>9</sup>

There has been debate between historians about the effect of blind-alley employment on the progression of boys into apprenticeships or more skilled employment.<sup>10</sup> Charles More concludes that many boys who progressed into apprenticeships initially had blind-alley jobs. He cites the Edwardian ‘Family Life and Work’ survey which revealed that forty-two per cent of respondents who were apprenticed had previously been employed in a full-time job.<sup>11</sup> He further proposed that the 1909 Boy Labour Report’s conclusions should ‘be taken with a pinch of salt’ because as most apprenticeships did not start until the age of sixteen, boys quite reasonably sought earlier employment elsewhere. Michael Childs on the other hand quotes from the same report to arrive at a different conclusion:

the theory that boys can become errand boys for a year or two, and then enter skilled trades, cannot be maintained. Very few boys can pick up a skill after a year or two of merely errand boy work ... The vast majority become workers in low skilled trades or general or casual workers.<sup>12</sup>

Childs concludes that errand boys and boy labourers usually became general and casual labours or joined the army.<sup>13</sup> Reginald Bray was one of the contemporary commentators More infers was overreacting. Bray, referring to the 1909 report wrote that, ‘boys who entered life as errand-boys very early; the vast majority become workers in low skilled trades, or general and casual labourers.’ He concluded that ‘it is impossible to resist the mass of evidence of this kind.’<sup>14</sup> But the complexities of evaluating the impact of blind-alley work, or resolving its perceived negative influences are highlighted by other observations that suggested it was not

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<sup>9</sup> *Problems of Boy Life*, p. 2

<sup>10</sup> The issue of apprenticeships, including the definitions of skilled work, are dealt with in Chapter 7.

<sup>11</sup> More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*, p. 64.

<sup>13</sup> Childs, *Labour’s Apprentices*, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Reginald A. Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship* (London: Constable, 1912), p. 129.

the issue of blind-alley employment per se that was damaging to young boys, but rather a failure to ‘transfer boys from blind alleys to more permanent jobs at the right time.’<sup>15</sup> How that transfer might have taken place, was seen by some as being resolved by the new labour exchanges introduced after 1910. But not all saw the idea of a seamless transition from initial employment to apprenticeship or skilled work as possible, or even desirable. Social reformer and early enthusiast for labour exchanges, Frederic Keeling, identified the challenge of dealing with boys capable of future progression and those that were not:

it is clear that those who speak of Apprenticeship and “learning a trade” as the panacea for the problem of boy labour and even the whole problem of unemployment are simply confusing the issue. The dull or stupid boy should definitely be prevented from becoming an inefficient mechanic, and perhaps blocking the way to a satisfactory career for an intelligent lad.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to the more recent debate about whether blind-alley work was really a major issue and of little impediment to apprenticeship or skilled employment, it seems reasonable to accept Charles More’s position when looking from the perspective of employed apprentices. But if one were to take *all* employed boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, of which between seventy to eighty per cent had left school and entered unskilled jobs, and accept the 1909 Boy Labour Report’s conclusion that relatively few would ever be apprenticed or employed in skilled work, then it is difficult to argue against the idea that for most boys there was a long term negative impact from blind-alley employment.<sup>17</sup> As Childs concludes, that because ‘some craftsmen had once been errand boys does not mean that errand boys often

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<sup>15</sup> N. B. Dearle, “Report of the Special Sub-Committee of the City of Birmingham Education Committee on the Institution of a Juvenile Employment Bureau and Care Committees in Birmingham,” *The Economic Journal*, 21:82 (1911), pp. 301-305, (p. 303).

<sup>16</sup> Frederic Keeling, ‘Memorandum on Boy Labour in Leeds, 1910.’ (LSE. COLL MISC 0841), p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Whitehouse, *Problems of Boy Life*, p. 2.

became craftsmen,’<sup>18</sup> and as Keeling observed, perhaps nor should they. The 1909 Boy Labour report, apparently questioned by More but more broadly accepted by others, ‘was only instructed to inquire in some of the larger towns’<sup>19</sup> and while it is reasonable to apply its conclusions to the Devon county boroughs of Plymouth and Exeter, and cities like Birmingham, its assumptions might not be reflective of what happened in rural environments.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the implications of ‘blind-alley’ more obviously impacted on those older than the age group considered in this chapter so the subject is revisited in Chapter 6 when studying the employment of boys aged fourteen to nineteen.

Michael Lavalette points to the many perceived differences between urban and rural employment and believes that commentators at the time saw child work in rural areas as far less concerning than that undertaken by children in towns and cities, as Bray observed when claiming all-round training prospects were better in towns and villages.<sup>21</sup> What was seen as a mainly urban youth problem was apparently corroborated in 1910 by a departmental committee on the employment of children that said, ‘the youthful street trader is exposed to many of the worst of moral risks; he associates with and acquires the moral habits of the frequenters of the kerbstone and the gutter.’<sup>22</sup> But not all saw urban employment as the only challenge. Robert Sherard drew attention to how much greater was the poverty of the land than the danger of urban moral risks, being ‘infinitely more dour than in the worst kennel in a city.’<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX. Report by Mr. Cyril Jackson on boy labour together with a memorandum from the General Post Office on the conditions of employment of telegraph messengers. 1909 [Cd. 4632] p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Cyril Jackson later commented that for his 1909 report he had only eighty days to enquire into a ‘practically unknown question,’ and that he could do no more than ‘get the merest outline of the problem to prepare the way for future enquiries.’ He remained particularly concerned about the future employment prospects for van boys and messengers. ‘Boy Labour. See ‘Mr Cyril Jackson’s suggestion,’ *The Times* 16 February 1912, p. 12. Comment from the teaching profession proposed that Jackson be ‘requisitioned’ with full powers to ‘complete a work he is so eminently fitted to do.’ ‘Mr. Jackson’s Report on Boy Labour. An Inspector of Schools,’ *The Practical Teacher*; 30:2 (August 1909), pp. 59-60.

<sup>21</sup> *A thing of the past? Child Labour in Britain in the Nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, ed., Michael Lavalette (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 135. Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Wage earning children,’ London School Economics, file: Child Labour Committee/3/138, pp. 2,3

<sup>23</sup> Robert Harborough Sherard, *The Child Slaves of Britain* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905), p. 231.

Before looking more closely at employment statistics it is worthwhile noting the number of younger boys engaged in some form of work, as reported by the 1901 and 1911 censuses. The decline over ten years of more than twenty-two per cent in the number of working boys under the age of fourteen, as shown in Table 4.1, was almost entirely due to the influence of education acts from 1870 onwards and the 1903 Employment of Children Act; legislation that both enforced longer attendance at school and which aimed to prevent long hours of employment by boys under twelve. But while these figures represented progress, local byelaws affecting over fifty-eight per cent of the population by 1912 still allowed conditional exemption from school for boys once they reached the age of twelve.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 4.1.** Boys under fourteen engaged in occupations. 1901 and 1911.<sup>25</sup>

1901	138,190 <sup>26</sup>
1911	107,141 (of which 31,580 were under thirteen*).

\* no comparative figure given for 1901 but on a comparable ratio it would indicate a minimum of 40,000 aged under thirteen. But the figure was almost certainly higher due to the result of legislation that had reduced numbers by 1911.

In comparison, Table 4.2 shows the breakdown in 1911 of boys aged thirteen who were in occupations in Devon and Birmingham. The total number of boys of that age within the Devon county administration was slightly fewer than the number in Birmingham but when adding in the county boroughs, the total for Devon as a whole was somewhat larger than Birmingham.<sup>27</sup> While in all cases the figures were relatively small, the number of thirteen year old boys actually employed was significantly higher in the county administration of Devon

<sup>24</sup> Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911, giving details of Areas, Houses, Families or separate occupiers, and Population: Vol. X. Occupations and Industries (Population: Census Returns, 1911) [Cd 7018.7019] p. 463.

<sup>26</sup> Summary Tables: Area, Houses, and Population, also Population classified by Ages, Condition as to Marriage, Occupations, Birth-places, and Infirmities (Population: Summary Tables: England and Wales) [Cd 1523] p. 209.

<sup>27</sup> As described by map in Chapter 1. 'Growth of Birmingham to 1930.'

than in Birmingham, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population of that age group. The numbers in the Devon county boroughs of Plymouth and Devonport were very small but the figures for boys in occupations, taken as a percentage of the total, were similar to Birmingham. The defining difference between the Devon county figures and urban areas was the employment of juveniles in agriculture, as explored later.

**Table 4.2.** Age Group Employed, 1911: Boys aged thirteen.<sup>28</sup>

	Total occupied/unoccupied	occupied
Birmingham	5280	374 (7%)
Devon administrative county	4202	874 (20.8%)
Devonport	618	16 (2.6%)
Exeter	485	69 (14.2%)
Plymouth	976	31 (3.2%)

While clear differences appear between rural and urban environments in the percentage of working thirteen-year old boys, the variance between the two regions for those *under* thirteen was similar, as shown in Table 4.3. What is most notable about all these figures is how few boys under fourteen were registered as formally being in employment, although family or unreported child employment almost certainly meant these figures were an understatement.

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<sup>28</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 [Cd 7018, 7019] pp. 463,467.



**Table 4. 3.** Age Group employed, 1911: Boys under thirteen.<sup>29</sup>

	Total occupied/unoccupied	occupied	
Birmingham	15,946	229	(1.4%)
Devon administrative county	12,361	228	(1.8%)
Devonport	1938	7	(0.4%)
Exeter	1314	16	(1.2%)
Plymouth	3064	23	(0.75%)

The categories in which younger boys were employed nationally are shown in Table 4.4. The list appears short, but boys employed in the jobs described accounted for over seventy per cent of the total employment of that age group.

**Table 4. 4.** National occupations of boys aged ten and under fourteen, 1911.<sup>30</sup>

Messengers/porters	25,697	
Textiles	23,399	
Agricultural labourers	9,900	
Street sellers/News boys etc	8,431	
Coal mining	8,121	(5,371 below ground)

While industrial or urban employment dominated, across the country it can be deduced that agriculture was still a major component of rural life, even though there had been a significant decline in agricultural work throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1851, nearly a quarter, or 1,544,087 males over the age of ten in England and Wales were employed in agriculture but by 1901, and within a growing population, this had fallen to 1,153,185 or less than ten per cent of the male population.<sup>31</sup> But in rural districts in 1911, agriculture still employed more than thirty-six per cent of workers, not including associated

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<sup>29</sup> Census Returns, 1911 [Cd 7018, 7019] pp. 463,467.

<sup>30</sup> Census of England and Wales, 1911. (10 Edward 7 and 1 George 5, ch. 27.) Vol. X. Occupations and industries. [Cd. 7018, 7019] p. cxliv.

<sup>31</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 [Cd 7018] p. xivi.

trades like malting, brewing and fertilizers.<sup>32</sup> In rural Devon (excluding Plymouth, Devonport and Exeter) the percentage of all males over the age of ten working in agriculture was even higher, being 40.7 per cent in 1901, and still 40.2 per cent in 1911.<sup>33</sup> There had been a national decline in some traditional trades like wheelwrights, millers and blacksmiths but the fall was not as significant in Devon because of the county's continuing heavy dependence on agriculture. Blacksmiths did decline from 2831 in 1901 to 2476 in 1911 but wheelwrights increased from 700 to 737.<sup>34</sup> Agriculture and associated employment in Devon should, however, be put into perspective. While throughout the first decade employment in agriculture in rural Devon was a constant forty per cent of male employment its importance to the whole county, including the county boroughs, was much smaller. In these circumstances the 1911 census showed the proportion of males employed in agriculture as seventeen per cent, while in industry it was around twenty-eight per cent and in commerce twenty-one per cent. Domestic service, inside and outdoor was next, with just five per cent.

It is worth briefly comparing the top five nationally reported 'first jobs' in 1851 to those of 1911 as described in Table 4.4, because they remained remarkably consistent. As already indicated, agriculture was significantly the largest employer in 1851, followed by messenger/porter, cotton manufacture, coal-miner and woollen manufacture.<sup>35</sup> Apart from street and newspaper sellers, jobs for boys under fourteen sixty years later remained essentially same.

Taking the employment figures for boys aged ten to fourteen across Devon in Table 4.5, including the county boroughs of Devonport, Exeter and Plymouth, and comparing them

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Dewey, 'Agriculture, Agrarian Society and the Countryside', in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 280

<sup>33</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 [Cd 7018, 7019] p. liv.

<sup>34</sup> Census Returns 1911 [Cd 7018, 7019] p. 161.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Census data taken from Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution*, p. 212.

to the national figures in Table 4.4, mining and textiles were insignificant but messengers and agriculture registered highly.

**Table 4. 5.** Major Devon occupations. Boys under fourteen. 1911.<sup>36</sup>

Messengers/porters	544
Agriculture	327
Street sellers	99
Domestic labour (indoor and outdoor)	56
Food/Drink/Tobacco	43

For comparison, the picture for Birmingham in table 4.6 shows there were apparently relatively fewer employed boys under the age of fourteen compared to Devon, which was mainly due to the absence of a large agricultural sector. But nationally and for both regions, messengers were significantly the biggest group.

**Table 4. 6.** Major Birmingham occupations. Boys under fourteen. 1911.<sup>37</sup>

Messengers/porters	297
Street sellers	17
Metal machines/implements	23
Food/Drink/Tobacco	12

The limitations of using census data are exposed in these figures, however, as shown when considering the census numbers for working street-sellers under the age of fourteen in Birmingham. The census figure is significantly lower compared to the number of boys actually licensed to trade. The numbers licensed in Birmingham across seven years are given in Table 4.7. Published figures were initially for boys aged eleven to eighteen but in 1911 the number

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<sup>36</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 [Cd 7018, 7019] Table 16, p. 462.

<sup>37</sup> Census, 1911, Table 16, p. 466.

of boys aged fourteen and above, within the total, was issued separately. The older group was much smaller, and by applying the same percentage to figures for previous years that those over fourteen represented of the total in 1911, the likely figure for street sellers aged eleven to fourteen can be estimated.

**Table 4.7.** Licensed street traders in Birmingham.<sup>38</sup>

	Aged 11-18	under 14
1905	2208	1666 (estimate)
1906	2178	1644 (estimate)
1907	1773	1338 (estimate)
1908	1770	1335 (estimate)
1909	1313	991 (estimate)
1910	1276	963 (estimate)
1911	1467	1178

By September 1913 the number of licensed children under eighteen had increased to 1,849 and again using the same percentage, 1,485 can be assumed to have been under fourteen.<sup>39</sup> The drop in licensed child street-traders in 1909 and 1910 was probably due to local regulations introduced in 1907 insisting upon a parent being present when a license was issued. The reason for the subsequent increase in numbers between 1911 and 1913 can only be guessed at but was almost certainly a result of the sums of money available to street traders, particularly compared to the sums earned by boys in more stable employment. Across the years described, the average earnings of street trading boys under fourteen in Birmingham was 8s. 6d. a week, although in some periods earnings of as much as 15s. were possible.<sup>40</sup> In contrast the starting wage for most types of formal employment at age fourteen was about 5s. So while the numbers for

<sup>38</sup> Bishop of Birmingham Committee, Report into Street Trading 1910 (LSE: HD6/155), p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> Bishop of Birmingham committee, p. 6.

licensed street traders under fourteen were relatively small, they were significantly larger than those reported in the census, and more accurately reflected the actual number of children on the streets. It is, therefore, easier to understand why the issue of street trading remained of concern to many social reformers.

The home circumstances of young street traders described in the Bishop of Birmingham's report<sup>41</sup> were that there was little sign of chronic poverty even without the earnings of the children, and that 'the majority are children of poor people, though not necessarily of destitute ones.'<sup>42</sup> Sherard also recorded that the Children's Hospital superintendent told him only two or three children a year showed any signs of wilful neglect.<sup>43</sup> In the opinion of the *Birmingham Daily Mail's* editor, however, the children who sold newspapers in the street were 'mainly the children of bad parents.'<sup>44</sup> The bishop's committee reported that the principal activity for boys under fourteen was selling evening newspapers after leaving school at 4.30 pm, until as late as 9.00 pm. Some boys sold matches early in the day, prior to selling newspapers. Other pursuits included the selling of betting papers at lunch-time and on Saturday mornings which was deemed particularly undesirable, because although legal, it largely took place outside public houses and the hours involved prevented boys having a proper meal-time. Boys selling betting papers were also seen as vulnerable to the temptation of betting, particularly in the regular periods of idleness that street trading created.<sup>45</sup> The danger to the moral welfare of child street traders in the city centre was believed to be much greater as it removed children from any parental oversight, however limited that might have been.<sup>46</sup> Many reformers sought to prove that street trading was injurious to the health of younger boys

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Gore, campaigner for educational and economic improvement for the working class, was the first Bishop of Birmingham (1905). When latterly Bishop of Oxford he gave annual lectures to the Workers' Educational Association in Reading. James Kiefer, 'Charles Gore, Bishop and Theologian,' Biographical sketches of memorable Christians of the past, <Justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/84.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Bishop of Birmingham committee, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Sherard, *The Child-Slaves of Britain*, p. 114.

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Sherard, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> Bishop's committee, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Bishop's committee, p. 9.

but a report by Birmingham school medical officers found that there was no evidence of any detrimental effect,<sup>47</sup> although the opinion of an overwhelming majority of school teachers was that street trading by boys under the age of fourteen was ‘a bad idea.’<sup>48</sup> Birmingham appears to have been slower than other large metropolitan areas in reducing youthful street trading because by 1902 police control had apparently all but eliminated the activity in Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford and Glasgow.<sup>49</sup>

The 1903 Employment of Children Act applied to a range of occupations in which children were involved but street trading was identified as still needing specific regulation. All Devon councils and Birmingham defined street trading in their byelaws as being newspaper hawking, selling matches, selling flowers, shoe-blackening, and singing and performing, although match and flower selling was seen as little more than a cloak for begging.<sup>50</sup> In major towns and cities like Birmingham, the ‘station-lounger’ also had become a significant presence. These boys, usually over sixteen, waited at stations to carry bags. Studies in Birmingham indicated that this class of adolescent had often been employed in the tube and rolling mills and in brass and bicycle works but had either fallen out with their employer or sought a higher income.<sup>51</sup> In evaluating the effects of the 1903 act, the Committee for Wage Earning Children referred to the 1910 majority report from the Royal Commission which suggested that street trading opened juveniles to the influences of the gutter leading to them becoming beggars or gamblers.<sup>52</sup> The report added there was no doubt that large numbers of boys so employed drifted into vagrancy and crime and it proposed that there should be complete prohibition of street trading for all boys up to the age of seventeen. Ultimately it was recognised that in many

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<sup>47</sup> Bishop’s committee, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Bishop’s committee, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Lives in our Cities*, p. 305.

<sup>50</sup> Whitehouse, ‘Street Trading by Children,’ in *Problems of Boy Life*, p. 45.

<sup>51</sup> T. Norman Chamberlain, ‘The Station Lounger, a Study,’ in *Problems of Boy Life*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Wage earning children,’ LSE file: Child Labour Committee/3/138, pp. 2,3

areas even the basic tenets of the 1903 act were being widely ignored, with many children under the age of eleven still involved in street trading.<sup>53</sup>

Before reflecting on rural employment in more detail it is important to understand the general feelings about children employed in the largest rural industry of agriculture at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Employment of School Children Report in 1902 found that agricultural work for school aged children was generally beneficial for health, although it accepted that in some cases the hours were too long.<sup>54</sup> It also recognised that most employment did little to encourage interest in agricultural work, rather there was a danger that it merely enhanced the appeal of working in the towns and cities.<sup>55</sup> But some believed that unless boys began agricultural work from around the age of eleven they would not become adequately trained for the future.<sup>56</sup> The 1899 education act had proposed that boys wanting to work in agriculture should attend school for two successive winters after the age of eleven while being exempt from study in the summer. The belief was it would ultimately provide a similar total time in education as for those educated full time to the age of twelve, while at the same time allowing them to acquire experience in rural employment.<sup>57</sup> The scheme was not a success with only 400 boys nationally taking advantage of it, and the disruption caused by boys returning from six months absence was an unwelcome distraction for schools.<sup>58</sup> In 1909 the Department of Education concluded that it was unnecessary for any boy to be absent from full-time education before the age of thirteen.<sup>59</sup> But while a similar recommendation came from the

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<sup>53</sup> Chamberlain, 'The Station Lounger,' p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> 1902 Employment of School Children Committee. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, appointed by H.M. Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department [Cd. 849] p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> This issue was not unique to Britain. A contributor to the American *Report of the Country Life Commission* (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909) noted that, 'the schools do not train boys and girls satisfactorily for life on the farm, because they allow them to get an idea in their heads that city life is better, and that to remedy this practical farming should be taught,' p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> 1909 BOE report of the consultative committee on attendance, compulsory or otherwise, at continuation schools. Vol. I.-Report and appendices [Cd. 4757] p. 197

<sup>57</sup> BOE report, 1909, p. 197.

<sup>58</sup> BOE report, 1909, p. 198.

<sup>59</sup> BOE report, 1909, p. 198.

Continuation Schools Committee, that the majority of boys should remain at day school until their fourteenth birthday, it also supported the contention that local education authorities should have the power to set their own age limits. The committee nevertheless advocated that where boys were given exemption for agricultural work at thirteen, a condition should be compulsory attendance at a continuation school until the age of sixteen.<sup>60</sup> The report made clear that these conditions for leaving school at thirteen should not be applicable to boys in rural communities who earned a living in other trades or services.<sup>61</sup> The issue of exemptions was criticised by the committee looking at the effectiveness of partial exemption from school and they concluded, with reference to agricultural work,

as far as the partial exemption provisions in rural districts are concerned, they do not have the effect of giving the children any useful agricultural training and are practically of little advantage to the farmers.<sup>62</sup>

If there was any value to farmers, the report found it merely provided a convenient source of cheap labour during the pressure of harvest time.

The 1903 Employment of Children Act set out very basic and arguably low standards of protection, especially with regard to the age that children could be employed in street trading, but it allowed local authorities to set higher standards if they had them approved by the Education Department. The essence of the act was for regulation rather than prohibition and it threw the responsibility onto local authorities, a step supported by the continuation schools committee report of 1909 referred to above.<sup>63</sup> Some, like social reformer Frederic Keeling argued that the standards set out in the act were inappropriate.<sup>64</sup> He maintained that no children

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<sup>60</sup> BOE report, 1909, p. 200.

<sup>61</sup> BOE report, 1909, p. 199.

<sup>62</sup> Inter-departmental committee on partial exemption from school attendance. Report of the inter-departmental committee on partial exemption from school attendance. volume I. 1909. Report [Cd. 4791] p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> Whitehouse, *Problems of Boy Life*, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> Frederic Keeling, *Child Labour in the United Kingdom* (London: P.S. King, 1914), p. 62.



should be employed in *any* role under the age of twelve (the act allowing employment for those aged eleven), and that for school children the only permissible working hours should be between 5 pm and 8 pm. In that context the byelaws proposed by Devon County Council in March 1912 were relatively progressive in prohibiting the employment of children on school days between the hours of 8.30 am and 4.30 pm. They did not, however, prevent employment of those under the age of twelve and did not stop employment before the start of the school day.<sup>65</sup> Many local education authorities reported there had been parental abuse of earlier byelaws, for example, where parents had exercised their right to withdraw children from religious education to notionally provide their own instruction at home while actually using the time for employment. Children could also be removed from school premises with no check made on their subsequent activities.<sup>66</sup> Some were taken out of school for months at a time, even though parents were liable for a fine of £1, a sum easily made up by one month of a child's work.<sup>67</sup> Employment usually undertaken in these circumstances included fruit picking or beating on shooting estates and it was acknowledged that in many cases school management were wholly ignorant of wage earning by pupils in their schools.<sup>68</sup> In rare cases where analysis of working hours by children was undertaken it was usually by the school medical officer. In 1909, the medical officer in Yeovil found that twenty-two per cent of all children aged over eight were employed outside school hours with over forty per cent working for more than twenty hours a week.<sup>69</sup> The problems of monitoring truancy and the excessive work load by children under the age of fourteen were not fully resolved until the 1918 Education Act with the introduction of compulsory school attendance up to fourteen.

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<sup>65</sup> 1913 [Cd. 6988] Employment of Children Act, 1903. Report to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department on the byelaw made by the Devon County Council under the Employment of Children Act, 1903, and on the objections thereto. By Samuel Pope, barrister-at-law. p. 3

<sup>66</sup> 1913 [Cd. 6988] Employment of Children Act, 1903, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Sherard, *The Child-Slaves of Britain*, p. 232.

<sup>68</sup> LSE, Child Labour Committee/3/138, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, p. 153.

**Figure 4.1.** 'Boys at the factory gate,' NW England 1900. British Film Institute, 'Electric Edwardians, The Films of Mitchell & Kenyon.'

Image has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

In April 1912 there were 13,462 children aged ten to fourteen of employable age in Devon, although only 2,000 were reported as being in work.<sup>70</sup> This was undoubtedly an understatement when compared to other counties of similar populations and bearing in mind that the figures excluded those working for parents or other family members. In addition the employment of children on farms and in the burgeoning tourist industry was also probably understated and a more realistic number of employed children was probably over 3,500. In 1913, Torquay and Paignton reported that nearly twenty-eight per cent of boys (eighty-one in number) employed in out of school hours were working more than twenty-one hours per week, with four boys working over forty-one hours.<sup>71</sup> In the Devon County administrative region, not

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<sup>70</sup> 1913, Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988] p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> 'Report of the Torquay and District Juvenile Employment Sub-Committee, for the period 6 May 1913 to 30 April 1915,' (Exeter, Devon Records Office, R4582A/2/TC/25), between pages 53 and 54 of Torquay Juvenile Employment Committee Minute Book.

including the county boroughs, school children were generally employed in fetching milk, carrying water and running errands to shops for widows and childless families.<sup>72</sup> This was done either on their way to school or in the mid-day break, with milk distribution almost entirely undertaken by children. In some cases a farmer would use his own children to deliver a number of small ‘cans’ to local cottages on their way to school and in other cases boys would work on a milk-round run either by a farmer direct from his farm or for a milk vendor working in connection with a dairy shop in a town or village. Payment was generally insignificant or even non-existent. Boys were also employed to bring in the cows and horses as well as milking, feeding pigs and poultry and picking up eggs. Catching rabbits was a principle occupation for boys in South Devon, providing a regular trade with the manufacturing towns of the Midlands and the North. In North Devon boys as young as ten were expected to milk two or three cows an hour progressing to five or six by the age of fourteen, but in South Devon the practice of boys milking was infrequent with the Farmers Union declaring that boys were not strong enough to milk. In the same way schoolboys in North Devon, but seldom in the south, were used to clean out cow sheds and to fill the cribs with roots and other food, ready for when the cattle came in. This chore was normally performed during the mid-day school interval. A farmer in South Molton justified the practice saying that,

somebody has got to do it. We have not got the men in our neighbourhood. We have to put boys to it or do it ourselves. We have no homes to put men in, and in the cottage my boy comes from they have two bedrooms and there are eight of them at home.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> All subsequent employment details also come from; 1913, Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988].

<sup>73</sup> 1913 Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988] p. 8. A contrary tone is expressed in a letter referring to a newspaper article accusing farmers of neglecting the education of children to ‘make slaves of them.’ The correspondent noted the use of mechanised farming in Devon and asked where, in Britain, there was a ‘more prosperous or more intelligent body of men.’ ‘Farming in Devon,’ *Western Morning News*, 6 February 1906, p. 3.

The custom of boys, and the sons of labourers from the surrounding area, working at local farms in return for their board and lodging was common practice. Reports noted that Devon had been at the forefront of the practice enabling farmers to use boy labour before and after school.<sup>74</sup> A dairy farmer with about fifty acres described how he had boarded three boys aged between eleven and thirteen from the same family. He said the boys were subsequently ‘sought after’ and went elsewhere at 2s 6d a week in addition to their board and lodging.<sup>75</sup> On the larger farms boys were generally used for lighter work to free up adult labourers for heavier tasks, but on smaller farms of less than twenty acres even young boys were employed on heavier jobs. A farmer described it thus:

The small holder cannot get the produce out of the land to sell it to make it pay and he cannot afford to employ a man. He must employ his own household and if he has any children he must employ them.<sup>76</sup>

Early in the twentieth century there was concern in Devon about the limitations of formal employment practices for juvenile boys and the apparent lack of training to take them out of blind-alley work. Evening classes were seen as one way of providing further instruction and education but as reported by one juvenile employment committee,

unfortunately many employers do not see their way clear to grant facilities for allowing those in their employ to attend any classes. This is more particularly noticeable in the classes of boys who are in “blind-alley” employment<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> 1902 Employment of School Children Committee. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of School Children, appointed by H.M. Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department [Cd. 849] p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> 1913 Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988] p. 8.

<sup>76</sup> 1913 Byelaw made by the Devon County Council, p. 7. See also, W. B. Hodgson who prior to 1906 undertook a review of agricultural England with a view to encourage a cooperative movement. He pointed to the disappearance of ‘the peasant’ from the countryside in Devon and called for a government land policy to support the national establishment of small-holdings. ‘To Colonize England,’ *London Daily News*, 12 March 1906, p. 7.

<sup>77</sup> Borough of Torquay Juvenile Employment Committee Minute Book (Exeter, Devon Records Office, R4582A/2/TC/25), p. 12.

While the 1912 Shops Act limited the hours to seventy-four per week that juveniles under eighteen could work in retail trades, it was still felt by many that this was excessive, particularly for younger boys.<sup>78</sup> Lobbying to amend hours to sixty per week, to include meal breaks for all employees, persisted through to 1914, and although the Employment of Children Act and subsequent county and borough byelaws were meant to legally restrict the hours young boys were able to work, there were many occasions when it was reported that the regulations were flagrantly violated.<sup>79</sup>

The employment time byelaws introduced by Devon in 1912 were intended to prevent pre-school and lunch time employment which had often meant children being ‘more or less unfit to receive instruction at school.’<sup>80</sup> But even here there was an adjustment to regulations allowing children to be employed in light work during the mid-day break; a move welcomed by teachers in that it reduced disruption in the playground and also, apparently, by many pupils in that it gave them something to do. The Devon byelaw that introduced the restriction in school-hours employment met with little opposition from traders and manufacturers but initially many farmers, and most rural boards of guardians were opposed, as were many newsagents and parents.<sup>81</sup> A resolution by the Honiton guardians deplored the probable impact on widows and poor parents whose children would be deprived of earning ‘a few pence a week.’ The motion was supported by all of the major Devon unions outside the boroughs of Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay. The Kingsbridge guardians’ objections, reflecting the economic value of boy employment to many families and the perceived value of early agricultural training, were detailed and worth considering in full. They claimed,

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<sup>78</sup> Torquay Employment Committee, p. 68.

<sup>79</sup> Torquay Employment Committee, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> 1913. Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988] p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Employment of Children,’ *Western Times*, 5 January 1912, p. 9.

That in a rural county like Devon to forbid the employment of children between 8.30 and 4.30 on school days is an unnecessary interference with the responsibility of parents.

That it will make the position of the small farmer who is one of the chief employers of schoolboys for odd jobs, more difficult than it is already.

That it will deprive the parents of welcome earnings and children of many a good meal.

That widows and others without children will be hampered in getting their milk fetched, water carried, errands to the shops done by children on their way to school or in the dinner hour.

That boys employed in bringing in cows and horses, milking, feeding pigs and poultry, rearing chickens, picking up eggs, etc, are serving a useful apprenticeship to farm work that tends to keep them on the land.

That the hour cut off from schools meeting at 9.30 or the half hour if at 9 a.m. will often be made up of children getting up earlier.

That if hampered as to their employment whilst at school parents will withdraw children of 13 from school sooner than they would otherwise, to the loss of the children and of the ratepayers as regards grants.<sup>82</sup>

Kingsbridge and the other rural Devon unions concluded that the byelaws should not be applied to rural areas.

Many believed there was a close correlation between urbanisation and blind-alley employment and that in rural districts earlier involvement of boys on farms gave them a better chance of continuity of labour and the prospects of enhanced all round training. This was probably more of a justification as indicated by the 1909 report on partial exemption from school which concluded that,

the temporary and irregular employment of the lads during a few weeks in the summer, though convenient to the farmers to meet the pressures of harvesting, does not give the all-round training which is wanted for a good farm labourer ... we are satisfied that as far as the Partial Exemption provisions in rural districts are concerned, they do not have the effect of giving the children any useful agricultural training and are practically of little advantage to the farmers.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 1913 Byelaw made by the Devon County Council [Cd 6988] p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> Inter-departmental committee on partial exemption from school attendance. Report of the inter-departmental committee on partial exemption from school attendance. volume I. 1909. Report [Cd. 4791] p. 8.

It was also widely believed that the countryside was only lagging behind urban trends and there was an inevitability that rural towns and villages would follow the urban pattern.<sup>84</sup>

While many counties and county boroughs issued byelaws without protest, it appears that in Devon there were such concentrated objections that the Home Secretary had to instigate a formal review as required under the 1903 Employment of Children Act. Elsewhere byelaws were varied in their applications. Those issued by Plymouth and Exeter prohibited street trading by boys under the age of twelve while Devonport prevented boys under fourteen working after eight o'clock in the evening in winter and nine o'clock in the summer.<sup>85</sup> Birmingham, like the Devon boroughs, allowed street trading by twelve to fourteen-year olds between 5.30 pm and 7.30 pm and prohibited any boy under sixteen working after nine o'clock. Prior to the 1905 byelaws issued by Birmingham, no limits had been imposed on either the age or hours of street traders.<sup>86</sup>

It has been shown that state and local government legislation from the late nineteenth century was influential in reducing the number of boys under the age of fourteen in work, but the impact was not evenly felt across England and Wales as regional and local circumstances dictated that even in the light of acts of parliament, change did not occur at the same time or at the same speed. In fact, the passing of some responsibility by national government to local authorities to determine regional and local employment policies through local byelaws inevitably led to an uneven progress of reform. Nevertheless, state intervention to restrict the time children could work began with the 1870 Education Act and was reinforced through subsequent acts defining the compulsory hours in which children should be at school. As this

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<sup>84</sup> Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship*, pp. 162,164,

<sup>85</sup> Bye-Laws limiting street trading, within the borough of Plymouth, 1903 (LSE file: Child Labour Committee/1/2), and the City & County of the City of Exeter Bye-Laws for Regulating the Employment of Children and Street Trading by Young Persons, 1908 (LSE file: Child Labour Committee/1/2), and Bye-Laws Regulating Street Trading within the Borough of Devonport under the Employment of Children Act 1903, made by the Council of the Borough, 1906 (LSE file: Child Labour Committee/1/2).

<sup>86</sup> Sherard, *The Child-Slaves of Britain*, p. 111.

chapter has highlighted, these regulations were not easily policed, particularly in rural areas where there was often unofficial working for family concerns, but by the beginning of the twentieth century pressure was building on parents and employers to end, or at least limit, the employment of those under fourteen. In addition, the practice of younger boys working was increasingly seen by Edwardian reformers as ethically questionable and something to be curtailed. The numerous committee reports throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, including the 1909 Boy Labour Report from the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress 1905-09, bore testimony to this. These pressures culminated in the 1918 Education Act which made attendance at school compulsory until the age of fourteen, effectively ending the employment of children under that age in all but tightly defined, limited periods as determined by local byelaws.

Devon and Birmingham both reflected the national desire for reducing child employment even if in Devon, with its traditional employment base in agriculture, the contention remained that some youthful employment, particularly on the land, was beneficial to the child and its future employment prospects. Michael Lavalette, referring to the statutory and social changes outlined in this chapter cogently sums them up. They,

did not stop children working, but it did deproblematize their labour activities ... Equally important was the fact that education occupied children during the working day. This removed the “problem of order” presented by under- and unemployed children. Thus, importantly work and education could co-exist.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Lavalette, *A thing of the past?* p. 138.



## Chapter 5: Education 1914-1930

In studies covering the period of The First World War, historians have considered its influence in a number of ways. There are some who look in some detail at socio-economic issues within that limited period but their interests include a wide range of subjects relating directly to the war years. These include religion, propaganda, politics, widening the franchise, housing, women and children's welfare and much more.<sup>1</sup> Others have written about the war's influence on education and social change but in doing so have either widened their period to include the war's shoulder years, or have included a specific chapter on the impact of the war on education within a much broader education and political analysis.<sup>2</sup> And a third group, looking at economic and social developments across the first two or three decades of the twentieth century, have taken those four years as part of the ongoing chronology of change. As economic and social historian Robert Morris writes:

The Great War acted as a stimulus and trigger of change. It interrupted and accelerated many trends but rarely appeared as a major discontinuity. There was a cluster of initiatives in 1919 and 1920 but almost all related to developments in the twenty years before 1914.<sup>3</sup>

Marwick, in his final paragraph in *The Deluge*, writes of change that happened because of the war but suggests it might have occurred anyway, more 'slowly and agreeably' had the war's 'distorting effects' been avoided.<sup>4</sup> While DeGroot, in his reassessment of the war, proposes

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (New York: Norton 1970), and Gerard J. DeGroot, *Blighty, British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longmans, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Here one looks at Geoffrey Sherington, *English Education, Social Change and War, 1911-1920*, and Brian Simon's seminal *Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920*.

<sup>3</sup> Robert. J. Morris, 'Clubs societies and associations,' in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, Volume 3*, ed., F.M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1992), p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> Marwick, *The Deluge*, p. 314.

that public fear of change constrained it.<sup>5</sup> Even the 1918 Education Act it has been argued, was based on the philosophical outlook of its author Herbert Fisher which was, 'change was desirable, but not too much; state intervention was necessary, but only to widen the liberty of the individual.'<sup>6</sup>

Because the focus of this thesis concerns education and juvenile employment and not wider social and economic reform, it is contended that the exploration of education fits more comfortably into the broader time-frame of 1914-1930. This reflects Morris's assertion that the war 'rarely appeared as a major discontinuity,' Sherington's contention that the war produced 'no great educational gains for the masses' and that the 1918 Education Act and its provision for compulsory continuation classes was only intent on restricting the freedom of adolescents as wage earners.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the National Union of Teachers (NUT), looking back from 1928 described how the 'cataclysm' of 1914-1918 and the subsequent depression and financial stringency had 'somewhat' slowed the growth of the education system.<sup>8</sup> All this suggests that analysis of the wider period, to cover war and 1920s initiatives for reform together, is the constructive way to proceed.

Before the 1902 Education Act counties took responsibility for elementary education through the auspices of school boards. The act established one national authority for all education which delegated responsibility back to county councils and new local education authorities to issue byelaws affecting attendance at school. The 1918 Act recognised the responsibility of the state for all education from nursery to university and directed every local

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<sup>5</sup> DeGroot, *Blighty*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Sherington, *English Education, Social Change and War, 1911-1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 180.

<sup>7</sup> Sherington, *English Education*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> 'Being a statement by the National Union of Teachers upon certain recommendations of the Consultative Committee of the BOE, and upon the reorganisation of the educational system now contemplated by the Board.' The Hadow Report and After, 1928. British Library, W73-5754, p. 5.

education authority to provide detailed proposals to the BOE for the schooling of all age groups, including proposals for delivering compulsory education beyond elementary school.

David Parker suggests that the First World War focused attention on the value of education and highlighted shortcomings that had previously existed.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the Report of the Department of Education (1917-1918) stated that the 1918 Education Act might not have been possible before the war but the climate had changed so that politicians and the state should express, ‘a larger and more generous view of the public responsibility in the sphere of education.’<sup>10</sup> Simon argues that pressure for change came most notably from working-class organisations like the Trades Union Congress (TUC), teachers and certain liberal groups,<sup>11</sup> and in support of his assertion that education was an ‘effective antidote to social unrest,’ he quotes widely from academics including Fisher and contemporary comment in the *Times Educational Supplement*.<sup>12</sup> In late 1916 numerous representative bodies proposed ideas for education reform with nearly all recommending some form of continuation education up to the age of sixteen or seventeen, with only the TUC advocating full-time secondary education to the age of sixteen.<sup>13</sup>

The subsequent 1918 Fisher Act, therefore, reflected a widely held belief that education was a good thing and that a settled society and successful economy would benefit from a clear national strategy, including the provision of universal secondary education.<sup>14</sup> Presenting the 1917 Education Bill, Herbert Fisher outlined six headings which the bill was intended to address.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> David Parker, ‘The Talent at its Command: The First World War and the Vocational Aspect of Education, 1914-39,’ *History of Education Quarterly*, 35:3 (1995), pp. 237-259.

<sup>10</sup> BOE report for 1917-1918 [Cmd.165].

<sup>11</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, p. 343.

<sup>12</sup> The relevant quotes and editorial comment are provided by Simon in, *Education and the Labour Movement*, pp. 343, 344.

<sup>13</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, p. 350.

<sup>14</sup> Lowe, ‘Education, 1900-1939,’ p. 428.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Fisher was the Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University and an academic historian before being appointed President of the BOE by Lloyd George in October 1916. Brian Simon, p. 343, describes his appointment as a sign of sincerity by the Government that post-war education would ‘have priority as a chief means of

1. A desire to improve the administration of education.
2. Elementary education for all children up until the age of fourteen.
3. The establishment of continuation schools to which all children would be obliged to attend.
4. A development of the higher forms of elementary education and an improvement in the physical condition of children.
5. A consolidation of elementary school grants.
6. A review of the national education system and an aim to bring the private sector into a closer relationship with the state system.<sup>16</sup>

The Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War also identified a need to improve the administration of education.<sup>17</sup> It noted the wide range of attendance byelaws relating to schools and the multiplicity of statutes that differed even in neighboring areas, an issue which the committee proposed needed simplification and uniformity.

In this respect the ambition to provide compulsory education for all those up to the age of fourteen was intended to end the half-time system that was particularly prevalent in Lancashire and Yorkshire, whereby some 30,000 children between twelve and fourteen years old had been allowed to split their day between school and work.<sup>18</sup> The committee recommendations were that there should be no exemptions for children aged between five and fourteen and no child under the age of twelve should be employed for profit.<sup>19</sup> There was also understanding of the special problems experienced in rural areas.<sup>20</sup> The Committee on Juvenile

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promoting in social life that equality of condition with which men now face death on the battlefield.' Simon suggests this was because under Asquith there had been a lack of concern for education. Sheringham, p. 75, refers to him as a popular choice with the TUC 'hoping for a great deal from him.'

<sup>16</sup> 'The General Framework,' *The Times*, 11 August 1917, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Final report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment After the War. Volume I. Report [Cd. 8512] p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> House of Commons, *House of Commons Debate*, 10 August 1917, Vol 97, cc. 741-852.

<sup>19</sup> *House of Commons Debate*, 10 August 1917.

<sup>20</sup> For further reading about rural education in the inter-war period see, Alice Kirke, *Education in Interwar Rural England: Community, Schooling, and Voluntarism* (unpublished PhD thesis, UCL Institute of Education, 2016).

Education in Relation to Employment after the War recognised agriculture as a skilled industry and for the benefit of its future health and young people working in it, recommended that the exemption for juveniles being employed in agricultural from the age of thirteen should be withdrawn.<sup>21</sup> The Committee's recommendation for the introduction of compulsory education to age fourteen was ultimately one of the few elements of the 1918 Act to survive into the longer term.<sup>22</sup> The declining economic picture of the 1920s meant most proposals were either not implemented or, as in the case of continuation schools, plans by local education authorities were terminated as central government imposed financial cuts, as described below. The NUT later acknowledged the 1918 education act's success in raising the school leaving age but recognised that initiatives for education beyond the age of fourteen had been 'temporarily abandoned' as a result of fiscal constraints.<sup>23</sup>

In some quarters enforcing the Fisher Act was considered politically nonsensical because its proposal to expand compulsory state education through secondary and day continuation schools was deemed illusory since demand for secondary education, in all forms, was much lower than advocates suggested. The counter argument lay in the growing success of employer-supported continuation schools with the provision of a closer association between education and employment.<sup>24</sup> Government figures support both contentions, although more considered analysis indicates that a growing demand for secondary education did in fact exist even if it was not overwhelming. Certainly the numbers of those under eighteen enrolling for

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<sup>21</sup> 1917-18: Final Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in relation to Employment after the War. (Education and Schools: War, the Great: Employment after War: Industrial, Commercial, and Social) [Cd 8512] pp. 7,8.

<sup>22</sup> The 1921 Education Act finally legislated for the formal compulsory age of fourteen in coordinating all previous education acts and measures relating to the employment of children and young people. Bill [passed, cap. 51] intitled an act to consolidate the enactments relating to Education and certain enactments relating to the employment of children and young persons (Education Consolidation) 1921. [Bill no. 174].

<sup>23</sup> The Hadow Report and After, British Library, W73-5754, p. 6. Chaired by Sir (William) Henry Hadow. Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University and a leading influence on national education. Published in 1926, the report's terms of reference were principally: 'To consider and report upon the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than Secondary Schools, up to the age of 15.'

<sup>24</sup> 'Better Work,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 9 January 1925, p. 4.

evening classes and similar schools, day technical classes and technical institution classes had remained fairly static since 1910, but the number of boys aged twelve and over in full-time state secondary education rose from 67,000 in 1910 to 93,000 in 1918 and to over 137,000 by 1924.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the total number of *all* pupils (boys and girls) registered for secondary education rose from 187,647 in 1913-14 to over 350,000 by 1924-25.<sup>26</sup> The number of secondary school teachers also grew by over seventy per cent from just over 10,000 in 1912-13 to nearly 18,000 in 1920-21.<sup>27</sup> But the fact remained that in 1922, of all children aged eleven to sixteen only 7.2 per cent were in secondary education and in 1937 the figure was still only 9.9 per cent.<sup>28</sup>

A report in 1917 from the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War (the Lewis Report) found strongly in favour of extending compulsory education. The committee had looked at education enrolment immediately before the war and recorded that 'in 1911-12 there were about 2,700,000 juveniles between 14 and 18, and of these about 2,200,000, or 81.5 per cent, were not enrolled in day schools or evening schools.'<sup>29</sup> During the course of their investigations, thirty-one expert witnesses gave support to the principle of compulsory attendance at day continuation schools to at least age sixteen, with only three against.<sup>30</sup> The committee's final recommendation was that for all those between age fourteen and eighteen there should be compulsory attendance at day continuation classes for not less than eight hours per week, or 320 hours a year.<sup>31</sup> The 1918 Education Act took these recommendations for day continuation schools and proposed that they should start in

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<sup>25</sup> Statistical Department, Board of Trade. Statistical abstract for the United Kingdom for each of the fifteen years from 1910 to 1924. Sixty-ninth number [Cmd. 2620] pp. 262, 263.

<sup>26</sup> Bill Bailey, 'Technical education and secondary schooling, 1905-1945' in *Technical education and the state since 1850*, eds., Penny Summerfield and Eric J. Evans (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> 'Education and Health,' *The Times*, 11 February 1922.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> 1917-18: Final Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education [Cd 8512] p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Evidence and Appendices; of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in relation to Employment after the War (Education and Schools: Employment after War) XI.359 [Cd.8577] p. 85.

<sup>31</sup> 1917-18: Final Report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education [Cd 8512] p. 8.

January 1921 and become compulsory by that autumn.<sup>32</sup> The 1918 act planned for schools to provide education initially for all up to the age of sixteen and subsequently, after seven years, for all up to the age of eighteen. Many teachers, however, believed that attendance should be regular and compulsory throughout the year, and the Manchester delegation to a headteachers conference tabled a motion that government policy was only ‘playing with education.’<sup>33</sup> In Devon, the Post Office Workers Union proposed that compulsory attendance should be required between 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. and for not less than eight hours a week.<sup>34</sup> Disingenuously, the Government subsequently claimed it had not received any ‘specific suggestions’ about the implementation of continuation schools, although as many pointed out, seemingly with some justification given the examples above, it was ‘snowed under with them.’<sup>35</sup> The BOE also warned in its report for 1918-1919 that successful national implementation of the day continuation school programme would require a significant increase in the number of teachers.<sup>36</sup> They argued that failure to recruit sufficient numbers meant, ‘the future to which the Education Act of 1918 looked forward is in grave peril,’ because in addition to normal replacement an additional 6,000 teachers would be required.<sup>37</sup>

A Devon case study showed that an estimate for the number of specialist teachers needed to staff their proposed new day continuation schools was for a minimum of seventy-two with at least forty for ‘domestic subjects’ and thirty-two for ‘manual instruction.’<sup>38</sup> The cost of initiating the first part of day continuation school education in Devon for 13,000 children up to the age of sixteen was estimated to be about £80,000 per annum, with half the

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<sup>32</sup> For further reading, Basil Alfred Yeaxlee, *Working out the Fisher act the human aspect of the continuation schools* (London, New York: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921). From 1917, Yeaxlee (along with Tawney) was a member of the national inquiry into adult education, sponsored by the Ministry of Reconstruction.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Day continuation Schools,’ *Western Times*, 29 May 1920, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Education-Exeter Proposals,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 16 February 1920, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Simple Test for the Cabinet,’ *Western Morning News*, 13 December 1920, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> BOE report for 1918-1919 [Cmd. 722] XV.45

<sup>37</sup> BOE report for 1918-1919.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Education Scheme-Devon Provision for the Future,’ *Western Morning News*, February 1920, p. 8.

funding coming from government grants and half falling on the rates.<sup>39</sup> The first school in Devon was opened in Tiverton in 1920 and deemed a success,<sup>40</sup> but in June 1922 Devon County Council asked for a breakdown of its accounts so they could judge, ‘the desirability of continuing the school.’<sup>41</sup> It closed shortly afterwards due to cuts in its funding. Government financial pressures led Plymouth Town Council to note in February 1921, with some exasperation, that the BOE had instructed no more capital expenditure be committed to the development of day continuation schools.<sup>42</sup>

In December 1920 the BOE signalled that the scheme would be officially delayed for at least a year, although it still encouraged schools to be started wherever possible.<sup>43</sup> But in January 1921 the BOE sent a memorandum to all education authorities confirming that because of serious education funding issues they would not entertain any new applications with fixed start dates.<sup>44</sup>

The funding issues referred to forthcoming recommendations by the Geddes committee published in February 1922. The committee was established to seek cuts in government expenditure and referring to education recommended an £18 million reduction across the country because its costs had risen unreasonably.<sup>45</sup> Their recommendation was ‘that progressive developments should be postponed until the financial situation of the country is better.’<sup>46</sup>

As an example of the rising costs identified by Geddes, the expenditure on elementary education in Devon rose by twenty-one per cent between 1921 and 1922, the biggest

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Devon’s Big Scheme for Education Reorganisation,’ *Western Times*, 27 February 1920, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Western Greetings to New Year-Tiverton,’ *Western Morning News*, 1 January 1921, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Devon Rates,’ *Western Times*, 14 June 1922, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Economy all round. Plymouth Education Schemes Held Up,’ *Western Morning News*, 15 February 1921, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Saltash Education,’ *Western Morning News*, 1 December 1920, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> BOE report for 1920-1921 [Cmd. 1718] VII.413.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Education and Health,’ *The Times*, 11 February 1922.

<sup>46</sup> Committee on National Expenditure. First interim report of Committee on National Expenditure [Cmd.1581] p. 116.



contributor to costs being teachers' salaries.<sup>47</sup> But reflecting general post-war sentiment that conflict was unlikely to occur again in the foreseeable future, labour and trade union organisations argued that if there were to be government cuts they should be aimed at armaments and military expenditure rather than education.<sup>48</sup> This was certainly a defensible position when the defence budget between 1921 and 1935 was consistently twice that of education.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the Association of Technical Institutions,<sup>50</sup> while supporting the government's need to reduce overall national expenditure, claimed that any reduction in education budgets would, 'constitute a national menace.'<sup>51</sup>

A few day-continuation schools were successfully established by the time the scheme was effectively halted; the first opened in Rugby in the spring of 1920.<sup>52</sup> Early commitment was most notable in Birmingham where twelve schools opened in January 1921, the largest number by any major city. To run the schools, planned to accommodate 15,000 boys and nearly 30,000 pupils in total, there was a projected cost for headmasters, assistant headmasters and mistresses of over £30,000,<sup>53</sup> and an overall call on the rates of £72,000.<sup>54</sup> But only weeks after their opening Birmingham City Council, believing they had been poorly informed about the running costs by their education and finance committees, voted to immediately end the scheme effective from April 1921.<sup>55</sup> A year later only three voluntary schools remained.<sup>56</sup> In London the authorities initially decided to limit admission to boys aged fourteen and fifteen,<sup>57</sup> but when

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<sup>47</sup> 'Cost of Elementary Education,' *Western Morning News*, 1 December 1922, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> 'Barnstable Labour Council and Education,' *Western Times*, 1 January 1921, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline*, p. 62.

<sup>50</sup> A key objective was 'to influence ... Parliament, County Councils and other bodies concerned in promoting technical education.' For a history of the association see, H. L. Haslegrave, 'History of the Association of Technical Institutions, 1893-1919,' *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, 2:5 (1950), 202-210, and 'History of the Association of Technical Institutions, 1919-1950,' *The Vocational Aspect of Education*, 3:6 (1951), pp. 71- 85.

<sup>51</sup> 'Education and Economy,' *The Times*, 5 March 1921, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> 'Rugby leads the Way,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 20 May 1920, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> '£30,269 in Salaries,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette* 27 November 1920, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> 'Day Continuation Schools,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette* 15 January 1921, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> 'New Day Schools to Close,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette* 2 February 1921, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> '5,000 Children to attend. Continuation Schools Start Next Week.' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*. 6 January 1921, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Committee on National Expenditure, p. 116.

in 1922 the BOE announced increased financial difficulties, attendance at compulsory schools became voluntary and by the end of the year all had closed.<sup>58</sup> David Fowler claims that a number of historians have ‘clearly’ exaggerated the demise of day continuation schools because in some areas voluntary schemes continued as, for example in Manchester and Birmingham where a small number remained on a voluntary basis well into the 1930s.<sup>59</sup> The 1921-1922 BOE report acknowledged that several day continuation schools, established before statutory obligation, were still in existence based on co-operation between employers and local education authorities.<sup>60</sup> These included a school in Bolton substantially funded by W. H. Lever, and later, the day continuation school opened in 1925 by the Cadbury family in Bournville.<sup>61</sup> But the national scheme envisaged by the 1918 Act was effectively dead, ending for the moment the plan for some form of statutory education for all juveniles up to at least the age of sixteen.

The subsequent 1921 Education Act confirmed the objectives of the 1918 Act and consolidated all previous laws relating to education and the employment of children and young persons.<sup>62</sup> But the failure to introduce compulsory continuation schools and education beyond fourteen left education reforms in the early 1920s, incomplete. Limited progress was achieved but aspirations including compulsory education to the age of sixteen and beyond, as advocated in 1918, were not realised.<sup>63</sup> Simon concludes, possibly harshly because of the establishment

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Day Continuation Schools,’ *The Times*, 10 January 1935, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, p. 49. He refers to D.W. Thoms’s essay ‘The Emergence and Failure of the Day Continuation School Experiment,’ *History of Education*, 4:1 (1975), pp. 36-50, and Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 220.

<sup>60</sup> BOE, report for 1921-22 [Cmd. 1896] X731, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> Elaine Harwood, *England’s Schools, History, Architecture and Adaption* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2010), p. 63.

<sup>62</sup> Bill [passed, cap. 51] intituled an act to consolidate the enactments relating to Education and certain enactments relating to the employment of children and young persons (Education (Consolidation)), 1921, [Paper no., 174]. Also: <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/twenties-britain-part-two/education-act-1921/>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

<sup>63</sup> Sherington, *English Education, Social Change and War, 1911-1920*, p. 182.

of compulsory education to age fourteen, that because of the ultimate failure to implement most of the Act's provisions it, 'did not mark a stage in educational advance.'<sup>64</sup>

With reference to the wider education debate, the Labour Party had been calling for the provision of nursery schools, the prohibition of wage-earning work before the age of sixteen, and the reduction of class sizes to a maximum of thirty.<sup>65</sup> The 1918 Act empowered local authorities to set up nursery schools but without making it mandatory. Richard Tawney, socialist, political thinker and education enthusiast gave the act a restrained welcome noting that the educational system was now more open to new ideas and influences than at any time since 1902. He drew attention to how local education authorities were empowered with discretion in implementing the new act, and how they had a statutory duty to 'consider any representations made to them by parents or other persons or bodies of persons interested and shall adopt such measures to ascertain their views as they consider desirable.'<sup>66</sup>

Tawney urged the Labour movement to make full use of these measures, but the Labour party has been described as slow to formulate coherent education policies because, as Roy Lowe points out, the party was 'an amalgam of pre-existing organisations with no clearly identified shared policy.'<sup>67</sup> But quickly after the First World War, Labour set out a series of ideas based on the principle that education was the responsibility of the state. Their policy for education, advocated in *Secondary Education for all; a Policy for Labour*, drafted by Tawney in 1922 was:

The improvement of primary education and the development of public secondary education to such a point that all normal children, irrespective of the income, class, or occupation of their parents may be transferred at the age of 11+ from the primary or

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<sup>64</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement, 1870-1920*, p. 357.

<sup>65</sup> 'Labour and Education,' *The Times*, 28 September 1917, p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Labour Movement and Educational Policy,' *Daily Herald*, 2 September 1919, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 427.

preparatory school to one type or another of secondary school and remain in the later till sixteen.<sup>68</sup>

The policy noted that ‘a large number’ of children were excluded from secondary education and recommended that all fees should be abolished.<sup>69</sup> The paper also remarked on the lack of sufficient places for all applicants.<sup>70</sup> Tawney saw the role of continuation schools as providing continuing secondary education, ‘not primary or preparatory,’ for those pupils leaving school at sixteen.<sup>71</sup> And while recognising the merit of day continuation schools as proposed in the Fisher Act he considered them ‘makeshift,’ arguing that there should be a ‘living and organic connection between primary and secondary education.’<sup>72</sup> Labour’s manifesto was to process seventy-five per cent of children aged eleven to sixteen automatically to secondary schools where education should be designed, ‘to reflect the varying social traditions and moral atmospheres and economic conditions of different localities.’<sup>73</sup>

By 1923 the idea of secondary education had progressed to the point that Labour Party policy was for the school-leaving age to be raised to eighteen at which time, ‘a university course would be made available to all young persons capable of benefiting from it.’<sup>74</sup> The projected cost was more than £137 million, an increase of £50 million over existing government forecasts.<sup>75</sup> In addition, the number of free places at secondary schools would be raised to forty per cent with an aspiration for fees to be abolished entirely.<sup>76</sup> At eleven plus children would be moved to distinct secondary schools, ‘providing some form of secondary education,’ and the school leaving age raised to fifteen. The creation of distinct secondary schools for all pupils,

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<sup>68</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all* (London : The Labour Party; Allen & Unwin, 1922), p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 17.

<sup>73</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 28.

<sup>74</sup> ‘Socialist Education Policy,’ *The Times*, 8 October 1923, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> *The Times*, 8 October 1923. p. 9

<sup>76</sup> *The Times*, 8 October 1923. p. 9.

rather than extending elementary schools to cater for pupils wanting to remain in education, echoed the 1904 Regulations for Secondary Schools which stated that secondary education provided education of a 'wider scope and more advanced degree than given in elementary schools.'<sup>77</sup>

In the 1920s 'all-age' elementary schools were unable to provide the broader academic curriculum of secondary schools, meaning pupils were unable to qualify for the School Certificate introduced in 1917, or the university matriculation exams.<sup>78</sup> The NUT later recorded there was 'a strong tendency' for pupils to remain in elementary education beyond the age of fourteen, and while recognising that many pupils would not stay for four years nevertheless recommended that all post-primary courses should be planned to cover a full four years.<sup>79</sup> In proposing this they advocated that in the later stages of some courses there should be a 'pre-vocational bias,' while for 'more retarded pupils' there should be greater emphasis on practical instruction. They also recommended that because of the difficulties in rural areas caused by the wider distribution of schools there should be a more flexible approach to setting the ultimate school leaving age.<sup>80</sup>

Socialist intentions were for about two per cent of the 'general population' to attend secondary education and for all fees to be abolished, as they had initially proposed in 1923.<sup>81</sup> In 1925 the attendance in secondary schools in English county boroughs was 0.92 per cent of the population. Devon mirrored this performance, but in Exeter the figure was 1.44 per cent.<sup>82</sup>

The Labour party saw potential problems in establishing secondary schools in rural areas and suggested that children over eleven be educated in a central location serving several

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<sup>77</sup> BOE. Regulations for Secondary Schools, 1904, in Education in England, the history of our schools, p. 1. <<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/boardofed/1904-secondary-regulations.html>> [accessed 4 June 2019].

<sup>78</sup> Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline*, p. 68

<sup>79</sup> The Hadow Report and After, British Library, W73-5754, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> The Hadow Report, p. 24

<sup>81</sup> 'Labour Education Policy,' *The Times*, 22 April 1926, p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> 'Devon Education,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 16 February 1929, p. 3.

villages.<sup>83</sup> University fees and scholarship payments would be made subject to need.<sup>84</sup> The total cost of delivering these proposals was estimated to be £107 million, some £30 million lower than their earlier proposals, mainly because of their changed position of lifting the compulsory school leaving age to fifteen rather than eighteen.

The 1920s saw several government-sponsored committee reports. The Malcolm Committee for Education and Industry, chaired by Doctor D. O. Malcolm, consisted of those involved in trade and industry, employers and trade unions.<sup>85</sup> The composition was criticised by teachers' organisations which pointed to the absence of any educationalists.<sup>86</sup> The report, published in 1926, observed that industry wanted elementary education to produce 'general intelligence and adaptability and not specialised vocational training' and the committee found that these requirements were generally being delivered.<sup>87</sup> The Malcolm Committee recommended that class sizes should not exceed forty and recommended there should be an expansion of playing fields and sports facilities.<sup>88</sup> This was supported by the NUT which called for a playing field to be attached to all post-primary schools and where this was not possible, arrangements should be made to 'transport children ... to suitable playing fields in the environs.'<sup>89</sup> The Malcolm Committee reiterated the view that compulsory education, either full-time or part-time should be extended, something supported by the TUC but rejected by the National Federation of Employers' Association because it removed a year's group of potential employees.<sup>90</sup> The committee proposed that local education authorities, in consultation with teachers, should establish a certification of attainment for all school leavers which was consistent across the country; a proposal supported by the Balfour Committee Report on

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<sup>83</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1926, p. 19

<sup>84</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1926, p. 19.

<sup>85</sup> For further reading about the TUC and educational reform, including their statements to the Malcolm Committee see, Clive Griggs, *The TUC and Education Reform, 1926-1970* (London: Woburn Press, 2002).

<sup>86</sup> 'Businessmen and Education,' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 23 January 1929, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> 'Lamps of Learning,' *Western Daily Press*, 30 June 1928, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 30 June 1928, p. 8.

<sup>89</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 70.

<sup>90</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 30 June 1928, p. 8.

Industry and Trade.<sup>91</sup> Balfour also recommended that technical schools be brought into a closer and more practical relationship with trade and industry. The Malcolm Committee recommended an improvement to Juvenile Employment Centres with the expectation they would advise applicants 'of suitable work and direct them into channels where it is likely to be permanent as well as progressive.'<sup>92</sup> They also wanted employment centres to pool information about work in neighbouring areas, although the challenge caused by the dual handling of employment opportunities between employment centres and local education authorities was highlighted by some observers.<sup>93</sup>

Mirroring the findings of the Malcolm Committee, the Balfour Committee Report on Industry and Trade found that there was no pressure from employers for children leaving school at fourteen to have had vocational training.<sup>94</sup> Balfour stated that employers saw the function of education to, 'lay a broad foundation of knowledge of general principles and not to try and teach the details of ordinary industrial and commercial practice.'<sup>95</sup> There was often contradiction, however, between this publicly stated requirement and what happened in reality. Employers frequently claimed that they did not expect the finished article when boys left school, just those well taught and ambitious, but at the same time questioned if educationalists fully understood the needs of industry.<sup>96</sup> There was, nevertheless, agreement that some combination of manual and literacy training should take place in the latter years of school if for no other reason that it would help stop the trend of brighter children being drawn away from productive industries to the 'black-coated occupations.'<sup>97</sup> It could additionally provide some

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<sup>91</sup> Balfour, Final report of the Committee on Industry and Trade, 1928-29 [Cd 3282] p. 211.

<sup>92</sup> 'Juvenile Workers,' *Western Morning News*, 7 March 1928, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Western Morning News*, 7 March 1928, p.6. For further reading see David Rolf, 'Education and Industry: The Malcolm Committee,' *Oxford Review of Education* 7:1 (1981), pp. 95-106

<sup>94</sup> Final report of the Committee on Industry and Trade, 1928-1929, VII.413 [Cmd. 3282] p. 203.

<sup>95</sup> Final report of the Committee on Industry and Trade, p.206. The attitude expressed by employers was reflected in findings by the TUC which said that, 'employers did not generally recruit staff from secondary schools except when looking to employ clerks or 'premium apprentices.' TUC Annual Report, 1927, p. 180.

<sup>96</sup> 'Education for Industry,' *The Times*, 11 January 1924, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Final report of the Committee on Industry and Trade, p. 203.

training in the use of tools which would be helpful to those who joined the growing body of semi-skilled workers.<sup>98</sup> The Balfour Committee highlighted the long-identified problem of the gap between the point at which a boy left school and the age at which many employers recruited learners and apprentices, and it directed comment to employers and workmen's organisations which took on learners from fourteen. It appealed to them not to inhibit the entry into skilled employment for those boys who elected to stay in education beyond the period of compulsory attendance.<sup>99</sup> For poor families, the fear was that other boys would take up the opportunities, because the employment of boys between fourteen and sixteen was attractive to employers as there were no national insurance costs.<sup>100</sup> The Balfour Committee proposed that the leaving age should rise from fourteen, although it was reticent about making any firm recommendations

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<sup>98</sup> Committee on Industry and Trade, p. 203.

<sup>99</sup> Committee on Industry and Trade, p. 212.

<sup>100</sup> Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline*, p. 61.



because it had not taken specific evidence on the matter.<sup>101</sup> A cartoon in *Punch* (Figure 5.1) also inferred that extending the compulsory leaving age was not universally popular.

Figure 5.1. The Mixture as Before. Minister of Education, "Doesn't Oliver Ask For more?"

Oliver Twist (aged 14). "Well, to tell you the truth, guv'nor, I dunno as an extra helpin' o' that old stuff's goin' to make me any fitter for the battle o' life." (Charles Trevelyan offers a schoolboy another spoonful of Elementary Education). Cartoon by Bernard Partridge, *Punch*, 26 November 1930, p. 17.

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The committee with its terms of reference drawn most closely to improve secondary education was the BOE's Consultative Committee chaired by Sir William Henry Hadow which

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<sup>101</sup> Committee on Industry and Trade, pp. 211-212.

began taking evidence in May 1924, publishing its first findings and recommendations as *The Education of the Adolescent* in December 1926.<sup>102</sup> Its primary terms of reference were:

To consider and report upon the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than Secondary Schools, up to the age of 15, regard being had on the one hand to the requirements of a good general education and the desirability of providing a reasonable variety of curriculum, so far as is practicable, for children of varying tastes and abilities, and on the other to the probable occupations of the pupils in commerce, industry and agriculture.<sup>103</sup>

One of its recommendations was for legislation for compulsory education up to the age of fifteen by the beginning of the school year in 1932.<sup>104</sup> The Minister of Education subsequently announced that the intention was to raise the school leaving age to fifteen from 1st April 1931, with an aspiration to lift it to sixteen as soon as possible.<sup>105</sup> Ultimately, compulsory education to the age of fifteen was not introduced until 1947 due mainly to the financial crisis of the early 1930s and the economies forced on the education service. The terms of reference for Hadow did not include consideration of stand-alone secondary schools and their place in a post-primary system, nevertheless his committee did review the division between primary and secondary schools and recommended there should be an 'end on division of primary and secondary education through which all children successively should pass;' a proposal the NUT claimed was shared by teachers, organisers administrators and others.<sup>106</sup>

The NUT was concerned that at no point in its recommendations did Hadow refer specifically to 'secondary' education and by failing to indicate ways in which current and future

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<sup>102</sup> Hadow was an educationalist, musicologist and like Fisher before him, vice-chancellor of Sheffield University. He was chairman of the Consultative Committee of the BOE between 1920-1934.

<sup>103</sup> The Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent*, London: HMSO, 1926.

<sup>104</sup> Hadow, p. 178.

<sup>105</sup> House of Commons Debate, *House of Commons*, 1929-1930, Fifth Series, Vol., 230, cc.612-615.

<sup>106</sup> 'Being a statement by the National Union of Teachers upon certain recommendations of the Consultative Committee of the BOE, and upon the reorganisation of the educational system now contemplated by the Board,' The Hadow Report and After, 1928. British Library W73-5754, p. 18.

secondary schools might be co-ordinated, it effectively stood in the way of its realisation.<sup>107</sup> The NUT wanted primary education to be regarded as ending at the age eleven plus, and for all children to proceed normally to some form of post-primary education. They wanted all schools for children over the age of eleven to be termed ‘secondary schools’ and for all secondary schools to be equally regarded. They also wanted to establish ‘a universal system of post-primary education,’ and called for measures to provide it to ‘go steadily forward.’<sup>108</sup> The NUT called for many more children to progress to secondary schools and while recognising the role of existing selective schools, even to the extent of promoting their expansion, it looked for greater provision of advanced education through senior classes in existing elementary schools, ‘central departments, or higher tops’ and ultimately in new ‘modern’ non-selective secondary schools.<sup>109</sup> It also called for the abolition of all fees charged by local education authorities for any form of secondary education.<sup>110</sup> The NUT wanted the introduction of compulsory education for all children up to the age of fifteen from no later than 1932-1933 and active consideration for supplying part-time education for some pupils up to the age of eighteen.<sup>111</sup>

Lowe has described the NUT’s response to Hadow as ‘muted,’ but while clearly unable to accept all of its conclusions, including concern over the omission of any mention of ‘secondary’ schools, their official reaction to the report was clearly positive.<sup>112</sup> The NUT welcomed Hadow’s ‘suggestions for its radical reorganisation and improvement’ and recommended that the report should ‘rank with the most famous of those official documents which have served as milestones to the progress of national education.’<sup>113</sup> The 1967 Plowden Report, *Children and their Primary Schools*, described Hadow as the architect of the

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<sup>107</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> Hadow, p. 66.

<sup>109</sup> Hadow, p. 66.

<sup>110</sup> Hadow, p. 66.

<sup>111</sup> Hadow, p. 71.

<sup>112</sup> Lowe, ‘Education, 1900-1939,’ p. 434.

<sup>113</sup> Hadow, p.5.

educational system, although educationalist Richard Selleck adopts a more nuanced view, that while undoubtedly influential Hadow effectively did little more than approve of what others had already proposed.<sup>114</sup> In the light of his support for proposals in the Fisher Act, the official policies of the Labour Party after 1922, and lobbying from the NUT, all of whom had put forward ideas similar or identical to those propounded by Hadow, it is difficult to disagree. But even if only pulling together ideas that had gone before, their consolidation provided a constructive template for the tentative reorganisation of secondary schools that began in the 1930s.<sup>115</sup>

While many interested groups and committees were enthusiastic in their support for raising the school age to fifteen, the Conservative government was unconvinced. Their Juvenile Unemployment Committee report of December 1923 claimed that raising the school leaving age to fifteen would be highly unpopular, particularly in rural areas,<sup>116</sup> presumably on the basis that there was low unemployment amongst young agricultural workers and in some counties farmers were complaining that ‘boys are scarce.’<sup>117</sup> Lifting the compulsory age would also be seen as ‘a striking reversal of a declared policy which has been officially defended on educational as well as financial grounds.’<sup>118</sup> The Treasury also objected because of the cost and potential objections from parents and employers.<sup>119</sup> It is not difficult to see the influence of the recent Geddes report in this rejection. Government policy was robustly contested by Charles Trevelyan, President of the Board of Education. He championed the concept of free secondary education for all and argued for a reversal of the coalition and Conservative policy of restricting free places in secondary schools to twenty-five per cent, and argued the figure should be raised

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<sup>114</sup> Richard J. W. Selleck, ‘The Hadow report: A study in ambiguity,’ *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 14:1 (1972), pp. 143-184 (p. 143).

<sup>115</sup> Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline*, p. 62.

<sup>116</sup> TNA; CAB 27/195, 1923, Juvenile Unemployment Committee, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> TNA; CAB/27/267, 1925, Report of the Juvenile Organisation Committee on Unemployed Juveniles 14-16 Years of Age, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, CAB 27/195, 1923, Juvenile Unemployment Committee.

<sup>119</sup> TNA, CAB 27/195, 1923, Report of the Chancellor of the Exchequers Committee.

to forty-five per cent by 1924-1925.<sup>120</sup> He encouraged the building of new secondary schools to double the availability of places and he offered his support to all local authorities who in the absence of government legislation wanted to amend their byelaws to raise the school leaving age in their regions. But he was ultimately unsuccessful and the 1924 Labour Government's Juvenile Unemployment Committee report rejected the idea of manipulating local authority byelaws, concluding the 'problem of unemployed leavers is such that special arrangements, for example by means of Juvenile Unemployment Centres organised apart from the main educational system, would offer better prospects.'<sup>121</sup> Legal opinion about the authority to raise the school leaving age simply to manipulate unemployment figures by taking fourteen to fifteen year olds out of the market, was that it might be illegal because under a BOE instruction there had to be 'a genuine intention to raise the school leaving age to fifteen either universally or very generally in the area concerned,' and that they could not apply it solely to maintain children in school until they obtained employment.<sup>122</sup> The potential difficulties of having different school ages in contiguous areas was also highlighted. The debates around employment for ages fourteen to fifteen are dealt with more fully in Chapter 5.

As outlined above, one of Hadow's objectives was to study the requirements for a good general education and how to provide a reasonable variety of curricula for children of varying tastes and abilities. In Devon, the Trustees of Dartington Hall, a trust established to launch experimental educational projects, including the founding of Dartington Hall School an antithesis to formal schooling by allowing pupils to develop ideas in an informal atmosphere. In 1929 they engaged Marjorie Wise to undertake a survey of rural Devon schools.<sup>123</sup> Wise was

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<sup>120</sup> TNA, CAB 27/195, 1924, Memorandum by the President of the Board of Education.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, CAB 27/202, 1924, Juvenile Unemployment Committee. A more detailed look at Juvenile Unemployment Centres is undertaken in Chapter 6.

<sup>122</sup> TNA, CAB/27/267, 1925, Report of the Juvenile Organisation Committee on Unemployed Juveniles 14-16 Years of Age.

<sup>123</sup> Marjorie Wise, A Survey of Devon Village Schools, 1929, Dartington Hall Records, Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, T/AE/2/B. Her report was not a singular document, rather individual school reports gathered over several months in 1929.

the author of *On the technique of manuscript writing* and *English Village Schools*.<sup>124</sup> The trust sought to investigate the standard of teaching across the county with a view to providing training courses and week-end conferences for head teachers on behalf of the BOE.<sup>125</sup> Wise's observations of many small rural school buildings was that they were not good enough. Most schools consisted of two or three rooms to cater for all age groups, from infants to those aged between eleven and fourteen but because of shared space some head teachers expressed concern about how to handle small children when the older ones were working.<sup>126</sup> Wise observed that in some areas managers took little interest in the running of a school, often interested only in their contribution to the social side of a village, for example, as places in which to hold dances. She observed that it was 'deplorable' that the school educational system allowed such people to be managers of schools when their only influence was 'a cramping one.'<sup>127</sup> The description of rural schools in Devon was replicated nationally as the NUT in 1928 reported that buildings were frequently inadequate, lighting and ventilation was often inefficient and there was often no proper water supply, and that 'in many areas they are properly cleaned only once a term.'<sup>128</sup> Figure 5.2 shows a primary school in Devon, built in the mid-1800s and still in service in the 1950s. The 1967 Plowden Report, referring to rural education observed that, 'many schools still lack piped hot water and the chemical closet and the earth closet still survive.'<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *English Village Schools* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931). The book was described as, 'vivid and extremely practical.' *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 15 October 1931, p. 4.

<sup>125</sup> For a similar investigation in the USA: Mabel Carney, *Country Life and the Country School: A Study* (Chicago: Row, Peterson, 1912).

<sup>126</sup> A pupil from South Devon around 1914 recalled that two groups of pupils, aged 7-11 and 11-14, and totalling between forty and forty-five, were taught by two teachers, side by side in one room. Cited in, Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), p. 293.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Bamford Speke school report (p.1), where the 'squire' wanted 'no improvements.'

<sup>128</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 57.

<sup>129</sup> The Plowden Report (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 175.

Figure 5.2. Thornbury, Devon. Built 1867, closed 1952.<sup>130</sup>  
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It is worth comparing rural facilities with an inner-city school in Birmingham. Figure 5.3 shows a picture of the Blue Coats School which in 1920 had 250 pupils and was a public elementary school like the one in Devon.<sup>131</sup> At the very least the comparison highlights the potential standard of accommodation available to some pupils in large urban centres compared to that available in rural communities.

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<sup>130</sup> Roger Sellman, *Devon Village Schools* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1967), p. 64.

<sup>131</sup> Keith Turner, *Images of England. Central Birmingham, 1870-1920* (Stroud: The History Press 2017), p. 96.

Figure 5.3. Blue Coats school Birmingham, which became a public elementary school in 1920. Keith Turner, *Central Birmingham 1870-1920* (The History Press, 2005) p. 96.

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In Devon, Wise found that most rural schools provided teaching in woodwork and gardening with the syllabus often associated with farm work because many of the boys in rural communities left school for work in agriculture. In those schools where woodwork and gardening were taught, it was claimed boys often stayed on beyond the age at which they could leave.<sup>132</sup> But in Brixton, outside Plymouth, the elementary school said that most boys left to work in the brickworks or the many glasshouses where they grew tomatoes.<sup>133</sup> The headmaster said that employers never came to him and the boys took jobs as they turned up, and he added that in his experience woodwork and gardening classes were useless in providing training for ‘a career in any sense.’<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Wise, *A Survey of Devon Village Schools*. For example, Sourton school report, p. 1

<sup>133</sup> Wise, Brixton school report, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Wise, Brixton school report, p. 2.



In several of her reports Wise referred to pupils working to the Dalton Plan, a pedagogical model which was initially conceived in the late nineteenth century United States. It was designed to tailor each child's education individually, according to their needs, interests and abilities.<sup>135</sup> The plan encouraged children to work independently and at their own speed with pupils being given individual assignments, to be complete within twenty days.<sup>136</sup> It was primarily aimed at children aged ten to fourteen and included topics to give them some understanding of life after school.<sup>137</sup> Rural schools were said to have started using the plan earlier than urban schools which was surprising as it was thought an expensive method of teaching, being labour intensive because of the amount and range of individual work produced by a class of pupils. But in smaller rural classes it possibly minimised the pressure on teachers, and the flexibility it provided for small mixed ability groups was obviously helpful.<sup>138</sup> Where no special or structured teaching existed Wise expressed her belief that for many pupils over the age of eleven, school was a waste of time.

The NUT also had concerns about older children because of the inability of small village schools to provide quality teaching.<sup>139</sup> They pointed out that rural schools were often so small that staffing was disproportionately expensive and that in many cases the only qualified teacher was the certified head.<sup>140</sup> Some areas had experimented with transferring older pupils 'to a school centrally situated where real educational progress may be made,' reflecting an idea initially proposed by the TUC and Labour in *From Nursery School to*

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<sup>135</sup> 'Dalton System Outlined at Plymouth,' *Western Morning News*, 26 March 1923, p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Western Morning News*, 26 March 1923, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> 'Freedom in the School Room,' *Western Morning News*, 4 April 1927, p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> In her report for the Hermitage school, Ilfracombe, which used the Dalton plan, Wise describes one girl's work as 'almost unbelievable.' Other references include Molland school (p. 2) and Stokenham where she describes the older boys as being able to work, 'almost entirely by themselves,' p. 1.

<sup>139</sup> 'Problems of reorganisation and salaries,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 21 September 1928, p. 12.

<sup>140</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 57. This was also the view of the TUC who noted that rural schools were not properly equipped, small and ill adapted for their purpose, with poor lighting and sanitation. They also had a far higher proportion of unqualified teachers. TUC Annual Report, 1927, p. 180. Miss Harris, head teacher of West Anstey school in North Devon is quoted by Wise as saying 'what an extraordinary lonely life a teacher's is.' School report, p. 1.

*University*.<sup>141</sup> The experiment had proved reasonably successful although the NUT warned that removing the top layer of pupils, could leave many rural elementary schools reduced in size and vulnerable to losing the services of even the one qualified teacher.<sup>142</sup> The challenge remained largely unresolved as confirmed by the 1967 Plowden Report which stated that teachers were still, ‘often working alone in their schools and with few opportunities for discussion with their colleagues, sometimes heavily handicapped by their buildings, responsible for children of a wider age range than most junior school teachers think practicable.’<sup>143</sup> In ultimately supporting the principle of transfer to larger regional schools the NUT pointed to the improvement in transport, although it argued the cost of it ‘should be entirely defrayed by the local education authority.’<sup>144</sup>

Rural school sizes of around twenty-five to forty, reasonably fairly split between boys and girls were common.<sup>145</sup> This demonstrated the challenge identified by the NUT, that the removal of older pupils to central schools would reduce smaller elementary schools to a size that could have made them unviable, especially affecting their ability to employ a qualified teacher.<sup>146</sup> In Devon, the unjustifiable cost to local education authorities for maintaining small rural schools led to the closer of more than fifty-three between 1903 and 1936.<sup>147</sup>

Wise visited about fifty schools across Devon to assess their standards of teaching and facilities. She was not above making subjective comments about reasons for underperformance. At Halwell in south Devon she noted: ‘There is quite a lot of mental deficiency and special

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<sup>141</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 58.

<sup>142</sup> Hadow, p. 58.

<sup>143</sup> The Plowden Report, (London: HMSO, 1967), p. 176.

<sup>144</sup> Hadow, pp.58,59.

<sup>145</sup> The Devon County Education Committee, List of Teachers, 1928, shows a number of public elementary schools with fewer than twenty pupils (Brendon school with ten), and the largest in Exmouth and Dartmouth with over 200. Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, T/AE/2/B.

<sup>146</sup> The local challenges faced by proposed reform (Hadow) are outlined in, ‘Future of Rural Schools,’ *Western Times*, 5 April 1929, p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), p. 273. Across the period 1906-1930, local press published concerns about the future of rural schools. For example a letter in 1919 warned that, ‘as teachers’ salaries are to be raised, a new attack will (under plea of economy) be made upon small schools.’ ‘Danger to rural schools,’ *Western Morning News*, 5 March 1919, p. 3.

defects in the school, one blind, one tongue tied and so on. Close inter-marriage seems to explain it.’<sup>148</sup> But it is instructive that in all her school reports she did not specifically mention anything about preparing pupils for work and careers after school. In several instances she observed that many boys automatically moved into agriculture and as in the case of Brixton, reported the headmaster’s comments about the lack of interaction between employers and the school, but she offered no thoughts about teaching for life after school. For most boys, it seems rural schools were automatically assumed to be steppingstones to life on the land. Wise noted that a very few pupils had won scholarships to secondary schools but in many cases these were not taken up because parents could not afford the additional costs of travel, equipment and clothing.<sup>149</sup> This though, was in some ways simplistic because wider disincentives to secondary education had been made clear in the 1918 Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the position of Natural Science in the Educational System of Great Britain which, while stating that ‘no pupil capable of profiting by a full secondary education should miss the opportunity of receiving it,’ had identified four issues that militated against it:

(i) the parents’ inability or reluctance to forgo the wages boys of fourteen can earn; (ii) the want of appreciation of the value of secondary education, even from the point of view of success in after life: (iii) the tradition of starting work at as early an age as possible: (iv) the desire of the boys themselves to escape from the constraints of school life.<sup>150</sup>

From the turn of the twentieth century there had been an increase nationally in the number of schools teaching special subjects. Beginning in 1907, the first year of figures that Statistics of Public Education in England and Wales produced for special subjects taught to

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<sup>148</sup> Wise, Halwell school report, p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> For example, a boy from Meeth school. Wise report, p. 1.

<sup>150</sup> Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into the position of Natural Science in the Educational System of Great Britain (Education and Schools: Natural Science), 1918 [Cd. 9011] p. 9.

1914, there was an increase in both the number of schools and the number of pupils. The number of schools teaching rural subjects rose by over 300 per cent and there was a corresponding increase of nearly 300 per cent in pupils receiving instruction.<sup>151</sup> The main topics covered were gardening and dairy work, so it is safe to assume that the majority of schools with these subjects on their curriculum were in rural areas, as reflected in Wise's reports.<sup>152</sup> By 1920 the number of schools teaching specialist subjects had risen again, from 3,253 in 1914 to 5,473, and the number of pupils taught, from 59,936 to 110,624. The number of schools and boys, giving and receiving instruction in handicraft, which was in essence 'light woodwork,' also doubled between 1907 and 1920.<sup>153</sup>

In rural areas, and at the older end of the education ladder, it was proposed in 1924 that the Ministry of Agriculture by arrangement with the BOE, should provide three levels of education through colleges, farm institutes and local classes or lectures. The first was for those boys leaving school after the age of seventeen and whose ambition was to own or run large farms and estates, to teach, or become experts or officials. The second level of training was to be delivered by farm institutes where it was proposed there should be one per county, or occasionally one shared by neighbouring counties. These institutes would provide training for young men already working on farms whom the report identified as: 'farmers sons and, incidentally of a few women who wished to farm on their own account.'<sup>154</sup> Finally, there would be local courses at evening or day classes, together with demonstrations and manual instruction in skilled farm operations, mainly aimed at workers already on the land.<sup>155</sup> In the light of a growing interest in agricultural education, evening continuation classes were established for fourteen to seventeen-year olds in many English counties, including Somerset, Staffordshire,

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<sup>151</sup> Statistical Department, Board of Trade. Statistical abstract for the United Kingdom in each of the last fifteen years from 1906 to 1920. Sixty-seventh number [Cmd. 1774] p. 325.

<sup>152</sup> [Cmd. 1774] p. 325.

<sup>153</sup> [Cmd. 1774] p. 325.

<sup>154</sup> Agricultural Tribunal of Investigation. Final report, 1924 [Cmd. 2145] pp. 324-326.

<sup>155</sup> [Cmd. 2145] pp. 324-326.

Durham and Hertfordshire. Classes in Shropshire, started in the winter of 1927-28 with teaching of rural lore, elementary agriculture and horticulture, poultry management and agricultural mathematics. These classes were attended by thirty-five boys and twenty-one girls, numbers that were later replicated and exceeded in other counties during the 1930s.<sup>156</sup>

In urban schools the syllabus was often structured and academically based. E. Dempster was a pupil at school in Exeter and his diary provides an insight into the daily schedule.<sup>157</sup> His day started at 8.50 a.m. and stopped for lunch at 12.00 mid-day. The afternoon began at 1.30 p.m. and lessons ended between 3.00 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. before, on most days, a session in the gym. Lessons included, arithmetic, geometry, handy crafts (lino block), scripture, English, reading, history, geography, singing, art, science and gym. Over one week in March pupils had exams in English, composition, maths, geography and history.<sup>158</sup> He also records excursions, for example, to the Civic Hall in Exeter to see an exhibition.

In 1920 the President of the NUT called for free secondary and university education and for reform of the dual system of education.<sup>159</sup> It saw the dual system as perpetuating class divisions because the pupils of public schools and the older universities generally progressed to work in the professions and senior civil service roles, while ‘the masses’ were consigned to the ‘lower ranks of labour.’<sup>160</sup> At the NUT conference in April 1927 there was a call for the restructuring of the BOE. Teachers called for a three-way split in board representation between members of parliament, representatives from local education authorities and the teaching profession.<sup>161</sup> The motion resulted from what they saw as the autocratic and anachronistic behaviour of Lord Eustace Percy the President of the BOE, demonstrated by his arbitrary

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<sup>156</sup> Lynne Thompson, ‘Agricultural education in the inter-war years,’ in *The English Countryside Between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline?* eds., Paul Brassley and others (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), p. 63.

<sup>157</sup> Diary of E. Dempster 1929 (Exeter Education Committee provided notebook), Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter, 5801Z/Z1.

<sup>158</sup> In English lessons, between January and March 1929, they read George Elliot ‘Silas Marner’ and ‘Merchant of Venice.’ Lessons occasionally included poetry.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Equality of opportunity,’ *Daily Herald*, 6 April 1920, p. 6.

<sup>160</sup> *Daily Herald*, 6 April 1920, p. 6.

<sup>161</sup> ‘Easter Conferences.’ *The Times*, 22 April 1927, p. 7.

dismissal of the Hadow report recommendations, proposals that teachers supported.<sup>162</sup> Recommendations, as already noted, that included the splitting of education between primary and secondary at the age of eleven and the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen.<sup>163</sup> The NUT demanded that before any future details of educational reorganisation were considered, consultation should be undertaken with teachers through a joint advisory committee.<sup>164</sup>

Women teachers predominated in elementary schools throughout the interwar years. In 1914 they represented seventy-five per cent of the teaching force and in 1938 they still accounted for seventy-one per cent.<sup>165</sup> If the findings of Elizabeth Edwards' research into various training colleges, including Homerton in Cambridge and Avery Hill in London, were replicated throughout the country, teachers came from the lower middle classes, which continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>166</sup> Edwards says her research 'would seem to indicate that throughout the period, students continued to be predominantly clever girls from lower-middle-class homes who had received secondary education at maintained grammar schools.'<sup>167</sup> Jenny Keating highlights the relatively good remuneration levels for female teachers following the introduction of the Burnham scale in 1918 with the starting wage for a trained school mistress rising from circa £90 per annum to approximately £150. Keating suggests they enjoyed a reasonable standard of living with some able to afford foreign holidays.<sup>168</sup> By 1922, the average salary of all teachers in elementary schools had risen to £266, an increase of 169 per cent on 1914, and in secondary schools to £389, an increase of 124 per

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<sup>162</sup> The National Union of Teachers. <https://www.teachers.org.uk/members-reps/your-union/about-the-nut/nut-history#5> [accessed 13 August 2019].

<sup>163</sup> The Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent*. London: HM Stationery Office, 1926.

<sup>164</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 70.

<sup>165</sup> Figures quoted by Elizabeth Edwards, in 'The Culture of Femininity in Women's Teacher Training Colleges 1914-1945,' in *This Working-Day World: Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain 1914-1945*, ed., Sybil Oldfield (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>166</sup> Edwards, 'The Culture of Femininity,' p. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Edwards, 'The Culture of Femininity,' p. 57.

<sup>168</sup> Jenny Keating, 'Teacher training-up to the 1960s,' History in Education Project, *Institute of Historical Research*, University of London, December 2010, p. 9.

cent.<sup>169</sup> This put teachers in the top 12.5 per cent of the population earning over £250 a year, making teaching, particularly in secondary schools, a respectable profession and increasingly appealing to middle-class recruits.<sup>170</sup> On top of their salary teachers also benefited from a superannuation scheme introduced in 1918, which guaranteed a reasonable income in retirement and so reduced demands on their incomes. As Sherington notes: 'If nothing else, the war had helped raise the living standards of the teaching profession.'<sup>171</sup>

Roy Lowe has argued that many of the developments in education since the Second World War had their genesis in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>172</sup> This resulted from the increasing centralisation of education, starting with the 1902 Education Act and the ending of school boards, the establishment of local education authorities and, later in the 1920s, how the various sectors of the education system evolved in different ways.<sup>173</sup> This last point was demonstrated by the fragmented development of secondary education whereby the selective sector expanded, often 'with expensive and magnificently designed premises' to meet the demands of the growing middle-class, while many poorer authorities looked to deliver secondary education through the less expensive route of senior classes in existing elementary schools and central departments (schools) before later building cheaper, non-selective secondary schools.<sup>174</sup> This piecemeal development led to local education authorities acceptance of the post Second World War establishment of a tripartite secondary structure of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools, as being an improvement on what went before.<sup>175</sup> Perhaps the overriding impetus for change after 1914, was the growing public sense that education was a good thing, as reported by the BOE in 1917 when claiming that the 1918

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<sup>169</sup> First Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure; Third Report. IX.287. 1922, [Cmd. 1589], p. 154.

<sup>170</sup> Sherington, *English Education, Social Change and War, 1911-1920*, p. 167.

<sup>171</sup> Sherington, *English Education*, p. 168.

<sup>172</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 426.

<sup>173</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 426.

<sup>174</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 431.

<sup>175</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 431.

Education Act might not have been possible before the war but that ‘the climate had changed.’ The NUT report in 1928, in pointing to government austerity of the early twenties, also asserted that the electorate would no longer tolerate educational efficiency being constrained by financial cuts.<sup>176</sup>

For all the debate about the benefits of education, reflected in part by committees established to review the different parts of the educational landscape, there was wide disparity in how ‘modernisation’ progressed. The Wise report on Devon schools and the NUT’s confirmation of a national picture of poor-quality rural facilities and small numbers of qualified teachers, clearly demonstrates the contrast in progress between different parts of the country.<sup>177</sup> And Sanderson points to the many factors that constrained any real progress in educational reform in the inter-war period, referring to the depression that followed the war which left a ready supply of cheap skilled men, reducing pressure to train more and the falling birth rate as families struggled to survive the economic downturn. This meant that ‘for the first time since the early eighteenth century the education system was no longer driven by the need to cater for rising numbers of children.’<sup>178</sup> Sanderson’s argument echoes that of the NUT who, as we have seen, asserted that war and depression had ‘somewhat abated the development of education.’ Nevertheless, there was a generally constructive debate and a broad will to progress. While most of Fisher’s proposals, specifically regarding secondary education, either never saw the light of day or virtually died at birth, the 1918 Act nevertheless reflected a growing demand for learning beyond the existing limits of compulsory education. Pressure in the 1920s from increasingly vocal bodies including socialists, liberals, the TUC and the NUT together with recommendations from wide ranging committees, helped in the pursuit of new education

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<sup>176</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 6.

<sup>177</sup> It seems little has changed, according to a *Sunday Times* report, 25 November 2018, p. 19. It refers to the more than 1300 ‘mostly primary schools’ having less than 100 pupils on their register and states that some schools, ‘are based in crumbling 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings with crippling bills for heating, and struggle to balance their books and recruit teachers who are reluctant to live in the countryside.’

<sup>178</sup> Michael Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline in Britain, 1870-1990*, p. 62.



policies. And although in the inter-war period these were perhaps imperfect in form, they nevertheless stimulated the reformist agenda and laid much of the groundwork for the significant changes introduced after the Second World War.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Sanderson, *Education and Economic Decline*, (p. 55), argues that in the interwar period ‘nothing went seriously wrong as regards education,’ but calls it ‘a period of wasted opportunities, when experiments failed or were abandoned.’ He includes the failure to expand Continuation Schools, the lack of progress in introducing Junior Technical Schools and not increasing the school leaving age to fifteen.

## Chapter 6: Employment, 1914-1930

During the First World War there was no meaningful dislocation of pre-war education policy and the potential of the 1918 Act was still to be explored. At the same time, when referring to the *employment* of adolescents, change was apparently significant because of a demand for boys to replace volunteer and conscripted men in the workplace, with an associated impact of high wages paid to young workers. As described below, many boys as young as thirteen or fourteen by the middle of the war were being paid as much as their fathers had been earning just two years earlier. This affected not only their attitude to employment but also their standard of living and their future aspirations. In that sense the war years *did* have a visible effect on the employment of young people. But because nothing structurally significant happened and no noteworthy legislation was passed, then as for education the years 1914-1918 might reasonably be considered within a longer time scale. As Selina Todd observes, ‘continuity has been stressed by many studies that span the First World War.’<sup>1</sup> This chapter will, therefore, acknowledge the dislocation to employment and the associated issues that arose during the war for youthful workers, then take a wider perspective of the years 1914 to 1930. The only deviation from this time span will be to recognise the roles played by employment exchanges introduced in 1909, and their BOE equivalents through the Choice of Employment Act (1910), which affected the transition of some boys from education to employment throughout the period covered in this chapter. Their establishment might reasonably have been covered in the earlier chapter on pre-war employment, but their introduction and development can better be understood when looking at a single period from their formation through to 1928 when their functions were finally merged.

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<sup>1</sup> Todd, *Flappers and Factory Lads*, pp. 715-730.

## 1914 -1918

After one month of war, seventy-five per cent of principal manufacturing employers described their position as being largely unaffected by the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Overall there was a short-term decline in employment of around two per cent, although this was not a figure applicable to all employment, with agriculture beginning to show in some places, a shortage of labour.<sup>3</sup> By late 1915 a significant, wider labour shortage had arisen because so many men had enlisted or gone to work in munitions factories<sup>4</sup> and employers sought to fill the gap by recruiting the unemployed, the retired and school aged juveniles.<sup>5</sup> But there was debate about the efficacy of employing children under the age of fourteen, particularly in agriculture where the greatest number were used, amid concern that children were being exploited.<sup>6</sup> In 1914 the Minister for Education indicated they would not prosecute where children under fourteen were absent from school and active on the land, specifically in the case of bringing in that August's harvest.<sup>7</sup> This was reinforced by the Prime Minister when he said it would be reasonable for local byelaws to be suspended so children of eleven could be totally exempt from education.<sup>8</sup> This was interpreted by many employers as a permanent suspension, for the duration of the war, of the rules relating to children remaining at school until the age of fourteen.<sup>9</sup> There were subsequently many instances of children as young as eleven being employed on farms as, for example, in May 1916 in Worcestershire where 109 children aged between eleven and twelve were recorded as employed in agriculture, in Somerset 74 and in Huntingdonshire 122, figures that remained consistent for the rest of that year.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'British Industry in War Time,' *The Times*, 12 September 1914, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 12 September 1914, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Birmingham Mail*, 17 December 1915, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Gerard J. DeGroot, *Blighty. British Society in the Era of the Great War*, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup> 'Child Labour,' *Birmingham Mail*, 12 February 1915, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Birmingham Mail*, 12 February 1915, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> 'Juvenile Education in Great Britain,' *Monthly Review of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 4:6 (1917), pp. 884-888.

<sup>9</sup> 'The Child and the Farmer,' *The Times*, 26 February 1915, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> BOE. School attendance and employment in agriculture. Summary of returns supplied by county local education authorities of children excused from school for employment in agriculture on 31 May 1916 [Cd. 8302].

The medical department of the BOE was established to supervise the health and physical condition of school children with their primary responsibility to keep children healthy, so they could benefit from their education. It was also widely held that many diseases of children subsequently affected both adolescents and adults and that the prevention of childhood illness would, therefore, benefit the health of the nation as a whole.<sup>11</sup> In the light of the employment pressure being placed on children during the war the Chief Medical Officer's report for 1917 warned:

Greater demands have been made on the children this year than in any former year of the war. Munition work of various kinds, a great variety of industrial occupations in the urban districts, and agricultural labour in the rural districts are extremely common for both boys and girls down to the age of eight or nine years.<sup>12</sup>

The main work undertaken on farms by boys between nine and eleven was general farming, milking and gardening.<sup>13</sup> In his study of vocational education in Hertfordshire during the war, David Parker claims that 'farmers continued to drain schools of their pupils, some farmers merely turned up at the school and demanded a specific number of workers.'<sup>14</sup> By the end of May 1915 nearly 16,000 children, mostly boys aged between eleven and fourteen, had been granted exemption from school to work as agricultural labourers.<sup>15</sup> Farmers were encouraged to use the labour exchanges to fill their vacancies before looking to the use of boy labour but the success of this strategy depended on established agricultural labourers using the service, and in their absence it was believed that the only recruits were likely to be 'the misfits of the towns.'<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> BOE. Annual report for 1910 of the Chief Medical Officer [Cd 5925].

<sup>12</sup> BOE. Annual report for 1917 of the Chief Medical Officer [Cd. 9206] p. 139.

<sup>13</sup> Chief Medical Officer [Cd. 9206] p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> David Parker, 'The Talent at Its Command: The First World War and the Vocational Aspect of Education, 1914-39,' *History of Education Quarterly*, 35:3 (1995), pp. 237-259.

<sup>15</sup> Chris Wrigley, 'The Impact of the First World War,' in *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, p. 511.

<sup>16</sup> 'Our Bread and Meat,' *The Times*, 14 June 1915, p. 3.

In Devon there were objections to children under fourteen being able to leave education to work in agriculture. The Devon County Teachers Association claimed that, ‘the sacrifice of the educational advantages of our rural children is fraught with danger, not merely to the individual child, but also to the future of the nation and the Empire.’<sup>17</sup> They proposed that parents should be encouraged to turn down the opportunity of a small pecuniary gain in the short term to protect their child’s long-term employment prospects. Nevertheless, in March 1915 the Devon County Education Committee accepted that children from the age of thirteen should be granted exemption from school for the period of ‘the present crisis.’<sup>18</sup> They were consistent, however, in rejecting applications from farmers to employ boys under that age,<sup>19</sup> and in May 1916, BOE figures reported that Devon employed fewer boys (151) under fourteen on the land than almost any other rural county.<sup>20</sup> There were also efforts to prevent exploitation, as in Torquay where a war exemption for a boy for farm work was rejected because the farmer was only offering 7s. a week rather than the minimum wage of 8s. 9d.<sup>21</sup> But in other areas of the country magistrates ruled that the exigencies of the time over-rode all local byelaws relating to education and that it was permissible to employ boys as young as eleven,<sup>22</sup> which Marwick tartly describes as ‘for work on the farms of the county magistrates.’<sup>23</sup>

Agricultural workers were excluded from conscription until January 1917, at which time a further postponement was made.<sup>24</sup> Then in the third week of January the War Office announced the call-up of half the men working on farms.<sup>25</sup> Farmers were reluctant to release

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Child Labour in Devon,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 22 March 1916, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Boy Labour on Farms,’ *Western Morning News*, 16 March 1915, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Devon Education,’ *Western Morning News*, 9 April 1915, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> BOE. School attendance and employment in agriculture. Summary of returns supplied by county local education authorities of children excused from school for employment in agriculture on 31 May 1916 [Cd 8302].

<sup>21</sup> Juvenile Employment minute book, 1913-1924. Borough of Torquay, Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter. R4582A/2/TC/25, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> ‘District News-Marldon,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 13 August 1915, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Marwick, *The Deluge* p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Agricultural Workers and their Service Notice,’ *Western Times*, 5 January 1917, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Bolt from the Blue,’ *Western Times*, 19 January 1917, p. 6.

men for service in the forces, and the Devon Appeals Tribunal ‘had to make some remarks that they would rather not have been obliged to make.’<sup>26</sup>

In industry too, there was strong demand for school children to fill in employment shortfalls. One example of such demand was the request in 1915 to the BOE from the Darlaston Nut and Bolt Manufacturer (near Walsall) which said that they were ‘engaged on work of great urgency for the naval and military services’ and that due to a shortage of labour it was ‘desirable that boys of school age be employed.’<sup>27</sup> They had received over fifty applications from boys between thirteen and fourteen years-old but the local education committee had declined to sanction the applications. The Secretary of State supported the committee but allowed that in circumstances where the Admiralty or the War Office confirmed an order was being delayed because of a shortage of labour, it could in future over-rule an education committee to allow employment of boys under fourteen.<sup>28</sup> The Munitions Health Committee noted in 1916 that one local education authority was allowing boys of thirteen to work full time in a munitions factory.<sup>29</sup> Across the first three years of the war 600,000 school children were withdrawn from school to work in munitions, agriculture and the mines, and by January 1918 there were in total, an estimated 1,354,000 boys aged under eighteen employed in the principle industries, of which 90,000 were under the age of fourteen.<sup>30</sup> In its 1918 report ‘Juvenile Employment During and After the War,’ the Ministry of Reconstruction reflected upon, ‘how lightly people regarded the taking of children from school to help the war along.’<sup>31</sup>

In both industry and agriculture there was unease over the impact of long hours and the lack of parental control, coupled with boys’ overconfidence and sense of independence arising

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Soldiers as Farm Workers,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 20 April 1917, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Employment of Child Labour,’ *Birmingham Mail*, 17 February 1915, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Juvenile Labour,’ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 1 March 1915, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Munitions. Health of Munion Workers Committee. Memorandum no.13. Juvenile employment [Cd. 8362] p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> The American publication: ‘Child Labor,’ *Monthly Labor Review*, 8:3 (1919), pp. 217-222 (p. 219).

<sup>31</sup> ‘Youthful war-workers,’ *Western Times*, 21 December 1918, p. 2.

from high wages and availability of work, all felt to be harming boy workers' discipline.<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of Munitions noted that, 'the present abnormal conditions of work, high wages, lack of healthy recreation, and in many cases the absence of the father, tend to thriftlessness, ill-discipline and other evils,'<sup>33</sup> and they sought to encourage employers to appoint welfare officers, 'men of good standing ... and sympathy with the boyish outlook,' to look after boys' education, health and recreational needs, as well as advising management on the employment of new workers.<sup>34</sup> Towards the end of the war these welfare officers were identified as able to help advise juvenile workers about the temporary nature of their high wage employment and to prepare them for the realities of accepting lower wages or to face unemployment.<sup>35</sup>

There was increasing concern about those under the age of eighteen who had been employed at a 'disproportionate high wage' but who would become unemployed on the return of peace.<sup>36</sup> High wartime wages are demonstrated by accounts of boys of sixteen being paid as much as 22s. a week in 1916, more than their fathers had earned before the war,<sup>37</sup> and by 1918 some sixteen-year olds were being paid more than £7 a week.<sup>38</sup> The Hendon Juvenile Employment Committee recorded in early 1917 that due to the shortage of boy labour it was not unusual for boys of fourteen to be offered 16s. a week, and a year later they were often paid more than 45s. per week.<sup>39</sup> Boys of seventeen were regularly paid between £5 and £7.<sup>40</sup> The Ministry of Reconstruction, in 1918, highlighted the challenge:

The truth is that the nation, having insisted that during the war boys shall do the work in industry of men, will find it difficult, when the war is over, to induce them to accept the payment of boys. In arduousness of labour, in earnings, in character, and outlook

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<sup>32</sup> 'The Factory Boy,' *The Times*, 21 June 1916, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Munitions. Health of Muniton Workers Committee. Memorandum no. 13. Juvenile employment, 1916 [Cd 8362] p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> 'Boy Labour Problems,' *Birmingham Mail*, 11 January 1917, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Reginald Arthur Bray, *The Problem of Juvenile Employment after the War* (London: H.M.S.O., 1918), p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> 'Boy and Girl Workers,' *The Times*, 30 November 1918, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Invaluable Boy,' *The Times*, 17 May 1916, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Notes in the West,' *Western Morning News*, 20 December 1918, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> 'The New Year,' *Burton Daily Mail*, 8 January 1917, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Western Morning News*, 20 December 1918.

upon life a generation of young persons has been forced into precocious maturity. Their morale, as much as their physique and industrial training, has undergone, if not deterioration – and often it has deteriorated – at least an unnatural and premature development. When the artificial conditions of war are removed habits will require to be changed, standards to be revised, expectations to be written down. The change from a high to a low economic temperature, from a world in which they are important to one in which they may temporarily be superfluous, will in any case be immense. Only measures carefully designed to break the shock of transition can prevent it from being disastrous.<sup>41</sup>

As a temporary measure it was recommended that Juvenile Unemployment Centres should be established in all towns with populations over 20,000, with close links to employment exchanges, trade unions and employers' associations, to maintain the welfare of unemployed fifteen to eighteen-year olds.<sup>42</sup> Those attending would be provided with further education, physical training, games and where relevant industrial training. In addition, it was proposed a maintenance grant be paid to the parents of young people out of work.<sup>43</sup> In May 1919, 215 centres had been opened although by February 1920 all had closed, predominantly through a lack of finance, but they were resurrected in 1924 when the Labour government supported them with 100 per cent funding through the Ministry of Labour (MOL).<sup>44</sup> At their height in April 1919, over 11,000 boys and 10,000 girls attended the centres.<sup>45</sup> But they were primarily relevant to manufacturing towns, particularly those involved with wartime production as a memorandum in December 1918, concerning the possible establishment of centres in Plymouth and Exeter, makes clear:

by the employment exchange officials at neither of these centres has there so far been found any need for Juvenile Unemployment Centres ... the young persons thrown out of munition employment were few, and these had almost at once been absorbed for other work.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in: 'Child Labor,' *Monthly Labor Review*, 8:3 (1919), pp. 217-222 (p. 219).

<sup>42</sup> 'Boy and Girl Workers,' *The Times*, 30 November 1918, p. 5

<sup>43</sup> *The Times*, 30 November 1918, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> B.M. Deakin, *The Youth Labour Market in Britain: The Role of Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 48

<sup>45</sup> Report of the BOE for 1918-1919 [Cmd.722] XV.45.

<sup>46</sup> TNA: ED 45/17



A school was established in Torquay in 1919 for boys who had worked in munitions but echoing the memorandum, the numbers applying fell so quickly that by 1920 it had closed.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to the concern that adolescents had become accustomed to disproportionate wages, the wartime demand for men caused training for a trade to become almost non-existent. Many of those who would naturally have supervised training were called up, and employers were unwilling to commit to training young workers when there was the possibility they too would be conscripted on reaching the age of eighteen.<sup>48</sup> As a result, in 1917 it was asserted that around two thirds of boys leaving school were in jobs with no training or career prospects.<sup>49</sup> This was particularly the case in non-industrial towns, as noted by the Torquay and District Juvenile Employment Sub-Committee:

Torquay and Paignton being seaside resorts and residential towns, few industries are carried on, and not many of the 500 boys and girls who leave school each year, are able to get an opportunity of a career other than is offered by the Building Trade, Shop keeping, and Boarding Houses.<sup>50</sup>

They noted that while there was a marked desire on the part of boys to learn trades in which they could establish a career, because of local conditions there was little help for them and they either remained unemployed or were forced into blind-alley work.<sup>51</sup>

The pre-war problems of 'blind-alley' employment, and the decline in traditional apprenticeships which is explored in Chapter 7, were thus exacerbated by the war with occupations often paying juvenile workers the equivalent of pre-war adult wages while at the same time denying them any meaningful prospects. Overpaid, large numbers were unprepared

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<sup>47</sup> 'Government Job Neglected,' *Western Morning News*, 7 January 1921, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> 'Child Labor,' *Monthly Labor Review*, 8:3 (1919), 217-222 (p. 219).

<sup>49</sup> 'The State and the Child,' *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 January 1917, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Report of the Torquay and District Juvenile Employment Sub-Committee, 1913-1915. Devon Heritage Records Office, Exeter. R4582A/2/TC/25. p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Torquay and District Juvenile Employment Sub-Committee, 1913-1915, p. 8.

and lacking skills, and thus vulnerable to unemployment when the war was over.<sup>52</sup> But it is important to understand there were differences within the adolescent age group, because it was the older boy who suffered most at the war's end as he had enjoyed high wages but lacked industrial training and consequently was often too old and overpaid even for blind-alley employment.<sup>53</sup>

## 1918-1930

Following the short post-war economic boom, fuelled by consumer demand and the restocking of heavy engineered products like shipping and manufacturing equipment, the slump that broke in the spring of 1920 introduced mass unemployment at levels not seen before.<sup>54</sup> The average proportion of the insured workforce out of work across the 1920s was more than ten per cent and if figures were available for the uninsured (those in employment not covered by factory and workshop acts and those under sixteen), it is probable the total level of unemployment was more than twenty per cent.<sup>55</sup> Finlayson shows that by 1932, 'the rate of insured unemployment for Britain as a whole was 22.4 per cent.'<sup>56</sup> At the same time trade unions saw their influence decline as mass unemployment made protest unrealistic for many workers, and the TUC was excluded from any influence at policy making level; as McIvor observes, 'the interwar depression facilitated the process whereby employers and their associations reasserted their authority in industrial relations.'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> It has been estimated that more than half of those under the age of eighteen who were thrown out of work at the end of the war were unable to find other employment. W.R.Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939. A study in public policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 95.

<sup>53</sup> Felix Morley, 'The Incidence of Unemployment by Age and Sex,' *The Economic Journal*, 32:128 (1922), pp. 477-488 (p. 488).

<sup>54</sup> K.D. Brown, 'Industry and Services: Employment and Unemployment,' in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 310.

<sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, And Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), p. 203.

<sup>56</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, And Social Welfare*, p. 203.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur McIvor, 'Industrial Relations in Britain. 1900-1939,' in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 332.

The questions of whether the choice of jobs for juveniles widened in the aftermath of war and if their economic position improved have been widely debated, with the contrasting views of William Garside, Daniel K. Benjamin and Levis E. Kochin in the late 1970s still providing a valuable starting point for analysis. Garside argued one of the ‘most pernicious and socially disturbing aspects of British unemployment between the wars as being the enforced idleness suffered by thousands of youngsters under the age of eighteen.’<sup>58</sup> Benjamin and Kochin on the other hand attacked Garside for failing to compare the rate of juvenile unemployment with the overall unemployment rate, a comparison which they argue shows juvenile unemployment to have been low.<sup>59</sup> They show that between 1920 and 1938 average unemployment was nearly fourteen per cent, while for those aged under eighteen it ran at only five per cent.<sup>60</sup> But the juvenile figures were arguably low because of the inclusion of younger workers under the age of sixteen who were exempt from insurance contributions and ineligible for unemployment benefits and unlikely, therefore, to have been registered at employment exchanges. Workers between sixteen and eighteen were only entitled to benefit equating to half that of adults, all of which made the prospect of voluntary unemployment for adolescents unpalatable.<sup>61</sup> Garside, however, points out that many of the vacancies available to juveniles were ‘unsatisfactory and intermittent,’ but with the pressure to contribute to family budgets and the release of thousands of adolescents onto the market at the end of the school term in which they reached fourteen, it left them with little option but to ‘join a scramble for the few and often unrewarding jobs available.’<sup>62</sup> He points to the rapidly growing distribution sector and the continuing decline of traditional apprenticeships in industries, like textiles, printing and

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<sup>58</sup> W.R.Garside, ‘Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s.,30 (1977), 322-339.

<sup>59</sup> Daniel K. Benjamin and Levis A. Kochin, ‘What went Right with Juvenile Unemployment Policy between the Wars: A Comment,’ *The Economic History Review*, n.s., 32 (1979), pp. 523-528.

<sup>60</sup> Benjamin and Kochin, ‘What went Right with Juvenile Unemployment Policy,’ p. 523.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin and Kochin, ‘What went Right with Juvenile Unemployment Policy,’ p. 524.

<sup>62</sup> Garside, ‘Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,’ p. 336.

building, as fuelling a surge in blind-alley employment.<sup>63</sup> Selina Todd cites several historians who in demonstrating that the absence of employment had a far greater impact on the levels of unemployment than a lack of unemployment benefit, were critical of Benjamin and Kochin's thesis.<sup>64</sup>

The 1925 Report of the Juvenile Organisation Committee on Unemployed Juveniles 14-16 Years of Age, found juvenile unemployment was 'strictly localised.'<sup>65</sup> In some areas the rate of unemployment was very high, in others there was a shortage of labour and the committee noted the problem was 'an urban rather than a rural one.'<sup>66</sup> In general, the committee concluded that although the economic picture was slowly improving, the absorption of juveniles into industry would be difficult for some considerable time. As a consequence it suggested the problems of mis-employment (blind-alley), in addition to unemployment, were exacerbated. This was demonstrated by data in the mid-twenties showing that for younger boys, the time spent out of work represented a significant portion of their time since leaving school. For boys of fourteen it was 64%, for fifteen-year olds 45.5%, and at sixteen 27.5%.<sup>67</sup>

To resolve an uneven spread of employment opportunities the government introduced a juvenile labour transference scheme in 1928, targeting in particular the South Wales coal mining communities. The scheme, with the preponderance of boys transferring to London, was generally welcomed by both parents and the boys.<sup>68</sup> Between February 1928 and May the

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<sup>63</sup> Garside, 'Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,' p. 336.

<sup>64</sup> They include economist Barry Eichengreen who highlights the difficulty in evaluating the numbers of juvenile unemployed 'due to the difficulty of accurately enumerating unemployed juveniles actually searching for work,' in 'Unemployment in Inter-War Britain,' *Refresh*, 8 (1989), p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> TNA. CAB/27/267. Juvenile Unemployment Committee 1925.

<sup>66</sup> The rate of unemployment for all those between fourteen and eighteen was also 'strictly localised.' In April 1925 the published numbers for a selection of industrial towns were Glasgow 3694, Liverpool 3400, Belfast 1416, Newcastle 939, Sheffield 900, Manchester 764, Cardiff 467, Stoke-on-Trent 370, Birmingham 354. In Liverpool the justification for its high figure was that it was not a manufacturing centre like Manchester and Birmingham, rather it was a distribution centre and had not yet benefited from improved industrial output. 'Why Liverpool Suffers Most,' *Liverpool Echo*, 28 April 1925, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Peter Roker cites the 'Report on an Enquiry into the Personal Circumstances and Industrial History of 3,331 Boys and 2,703 Girls Registered for Employment at Employment Exchanges and Juvenile Employment Bureaux. His Majesty's Stationery Office,' in *Economica*, No., 18. (1926), pp. 366-368.

<sup>68</sup> Report of the MOL for 1928 [Cmd.3333] p. 52.

following year, 3,000 boys had been transported to jobs outside depressed areas.<sup>69</sup> Apart from the transference scheme the numbers traveling outside their home environs for work by 1927 was already significant, for example, many boys travelled into Oxford from outlying areas to work in the motor car industry and boys from Leamington and other towns were transported to work in the silk and metal trades of Coventry.<sup>70</sup> While not providing unemployment figures for boys at a local level, the 1928 MOL report clearly highlighted the disparity between London and the south and the old industrialised regions of Wales and the North of England as shown in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1.** Average monthly percentage rate of unemployment among insured boys in 1928.<sup>71</sup>

London	2.1
South Eastern	2.1
South Western	2.9
Midlands	3.3
North Eastern	4.9
North Western	4.4
Scotland	4.7
Wales	8.7

In 1925, educational administrator and historian Bolton King wrote that the choice of vocation was limited because many areas were devoted to one predominant industry.<sup>72</sup> He cited the examples of Oldham with textiles, Sheffield and steelwork, and Tyneside with ship building and he described how within major cities specific districts also dictated the likely route to employment, as with the jewellery quarter in Birmingham and tailoring in east London. While transport was improving, King concluded that daily travel of any great distance to work

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<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Labour. Memorandum on the shortage, surplus and redistribution of juvenile labour during the years 1928 to 1933 based on the views of local juvenile employment committees. 1928-29 [Cmd.3327] p.11. For a detailed analysis of the number and ages of workers migrating to the midlands: Brinley Thomas, 'The Influx of Labour into the Midlands 1920-37,' *Economica*, 5:20, (1938), 410-434. This includes the observation that many migrants failed to settle and returned home at the slightest inducement, p. 427.

<sup>70</sup> Report of the MOL for 1927 [Cmd.3090] p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> Report of the MOL for the year 1928 [Cmd.3333] p. 48.

<sup>72</sup> *The Employment and Welfare of Juveniles* (London: Murray, 1925), p. 49.

remained unpopular. Todd, however, claims that ‘the interwar years were significant in expanding the choice of employment and leisure activities for young people.’<sup>73</sup> But while she quite reasonably points to the cinema and dance hall as examples of increasing leisure facilities, she accepts that employment opportunities in small towns and rural areas were limited. She cites studies in Lancashire and Scotland to demonstrate that the lifestyles of young people in small towns and rural areas were in some important ways quite different. Trips to the cinema or dance hall were far less frequent and employment opportunities were often limited to ‘depressed sectors like textiles, mining and agriculture, leaving them vulnerable to unemployment.’<sup>74</sup> Todd also acknowledges that the expanding choice of employment was, ‘because the buoyancy of labour demand for young people was based on their low cost and low level of trade union representation, which made them attractive to employers seeking casual or seasonal workers,’ circumstances that might well have provided relatively well-paid jobs but hardly those that would provide for long term security or careers.<sup>75</sup> Table 6.2 shows the adolescent, male participation rates (per cent) in employment between 1911 and 1931.

**Table 6. 2.** Adolescent, male employment, per cent, 1911 and 1931.<sup>76</sup>

Age group	1911	1921	1931
14 - 15	73.1	64.7	63.2
16 - 17	92.1	91.4	88.5

At first glance the figures might indicate that youth unemployment was rising, but more likely they reflect the greater number of pupils remaining in some form of education. From 1921 this

<sup>73</sup> Todd, ‘Flappers and Factory Lads,’ p. 718.

<sup>74</sup> Todd, ‘Flappers and Factory Lads,’ p. 723.

<sup>75</sup> Todd, ‘Flappers and Factory Lads,’ p. 722.

<sup>76</sup> Ed Butchart, ‘Unemployment and non-unemployment in interwar Britain.’ Discussion Papers in *Economic and Social History*, Number 16, University of Oxford, 1997.

was particularly true for the age-group fourteen to fifteen following the implementation of the 1918 Education Act and the lifting of the compulsory school age to fourteen. Figures from the BOE confirm this, with the number of pupils aged fourteen on the registers of Public Elementary Schools in 1921 being 142,043 (of which over fifty-two per cent were boys),<sup>77</sup> rising to 653,570 in 1930 (no gender break-out provided).<sup>78</sup> For those aged sixteen, in 1921 the figure stood at 924 and by 1930 it had risen to 708,860.

In both 1924 and 1925 the unemployment rate for all insured juveniles (those aged sixteen to seventeen) was 4.1 per cent rising to 5.1 per cent in 1926.<sup>79</sup> This compared to an insured adult unemployment rate of thirteen per cent in 1926.<sup>80</sup> In 1927 the unemployment rate for insured juveniles fell to 3.5 per cent against an adult figure of 10.2 per cent. Because boys under sixteen were not included in the national insurance scheme and were, as a result, unlikely to register at any employment bureau, understanding of the real state of juvenile employment between the wars is incomplete,<sup>81</sup> as Garside cautions in highlighting the gap in statistical knowledge of interwar juvenile employment.<sup>82</sup> There was a certain irony in that as the rate of unemployment for juveniles had apparently remained consistently low from the early 1920s while adult employment had stayed relatively high, the juvenile unemployment rate began to rise as the 1930s approached, even as the effects of the First World War declining birth-rate were being felt.

The 1930's depression<sup>83</sup> meant that industry was unable to absorb even a smaller number of workers and unemployment among insured boys rose from three per cent in 1929 to

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<sup>77</sup> BOE, report for 1922-1923 [Cmd. 2179] p. 174.

<sup>78</sup> BOE, report for 1930-1931 [Cmd. 3856] p. 108.

<sup>79</sup> Report of the MOL for 1928 [Cmd. 3333] p. 42.

<sup>80</sup> [Cmd.3333] p.42.

<sup>81</sup> MOL, 1928 [Cmd. 3333] p. 43.

<sup>82</sup> *British Unemployment, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 96.

<sup>83</sup> Ed Butchart, 'Unemployment and Non-Employment in Interwar Britain,' questions the 'depth' of the 1930's depression in Britain arguing that GDP decline was relatively low (4.9% between 1929 and 1932) and that recovery came comparatively quickly in comparison to other economies. With reference to unemployment he cites the Unemployment Assistance Board which noted at the end of 1938 that, 'there are large numbers of men whose long unemployment is due to the fact that they are without skill or experience. Many such men are victims

over eight per cent in 1933.<sup>84</sup> The MOL concluded that the best means of dealing with unemployment for this age group was to encourage them to attend juvenile unemployment centres, although it was recognised that those under sixteen could not be compelled to do so. As an incentive it was advocated that adolescents under sixteen could be paid a weekly grant, subject to a given number of attendances. In Plymouth, four centres were open in 1926, two for boys and two for girls.<sup>85</sup> The centres were open for fifty weeks of the year with the average attendance of boys being fifty-seven and every juvenile given twenty-five hours of instruction per week. By contrast, and reflecting the higher demand for boy labour in urban, industrialised environments, Birmingham had only one school for each of boys and girls and they were open for just thirteen weeks. Average attendance by boys was only thirty-one and they received merely 17.5 hours instruction each week.<sup>86</sup> But there were also significant variations in unemployment figures between major urban centres as comparisons between Birmingham and Glasgow demonstrate. In Glasgow, protection from conscription during the war had been greater because of the number of heavy munitions industries and as a result the decline in the birth rate had been less marked.<sup>87</sup> In addition, thousands of families had migrated to the area to work, all of which led to a steady supply of labour leading to a greater likelihood of unemployment compared to areas, like Birmingham, where demand outstripped supply.<sup>88</sup> Seventeen centres for boys were, therefore, open in Glasgow for forty-six weeks a year with an average attendance of 1,161 per week.<sup>89</sup> The following year (1927), both the number of

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of 'blind-alley' employment, having spent their most impressionable years in some occupation which gave them no lasting industrial value,' indicating that the issue of low skilled, low prospect employment discussed in this thesis was a perpetual problem and arguably still existing today, as described by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. (Introduction, p. 28). Butchart concludes that, 'over the course of the 1930s the estimated unemployment rate seems simply to have become a more accurate measure of the extent of joblessness.'

<sup>84</sup> William Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939*, p. 104.

<sup>85</sup> Report of the MOL for 1926 [Cmd. 2856] p. 121.

<sup>86</sup> [Cmd.2856] p.121.

<sup>87</sup> MOL. Memorandum on the shortage, surplus and redistribution of juvenile labour during the years 1928 to 1933 based on the views of local juvenile employment committees [Cmd.3327] p. 3

<sup>88</sup> [Cmd.3327] p. 3

<sup>89</sup> [Cmd.3327] p. 122.



centres in Plymouth and the average attendance remained the same but indicating the demand for boy labour in urban industrial areas, no centres were left in Birmingham and even in Glasgow the average attendance fell by nearly thirty-five per cent to 760 boys.<sup>90</sup>

An alternative recommendation to the establishment of Juvenile Unemployment Centres was to reduce the entry age for unemployment insurance to fourteen, circumstance the Government predicted would lead to a total of 700,000 children between fourteen and sixteen becoming eligible.<sup>91</sup> The Treasury expressed hostility because it feared setting a precedent for other age-related benefits such as health insurance and because of their age, it believed claims would be made by those who had paid virtually nothing into the scheme. The 1925 Juvenile Unemployment Committee suggested Treasury objections would cement the very ‘widespread feeling that the unemployed are being demoralised by being pauperised.’<sup>92</sup>

The 1911 National Insurance Act provided cover against sickness and unemployment and supplied an approved list of organisations, including friendly societies and trade unions, to which workers could contribute allowing them to call on the services of a doctor appointed to the local panel. For unemployment cover workers and employers contributed 2½d. each with the Treasury adding 1½d. for each insured person.<sup>93</sup> The scheme was not designed to provide full unemployment benefits, rather it was planned that they should be supplemented by savings or trade union contributions. The period of support was for a maximum fifteen weeks during which time the recipient was prohibited from striking. The typical weekly payment was 7s. which, for contrast, was significantly lower than that paid by any Poor Law board of guardians.<sup>94</sup> Immediately after the war and in the face of rising unemployment, the scheme was expanded to include all manual and non-manual workers earning less than £250 a year,

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<sup>90</sup> Report of the MOL for 1927 [Cmd.3090] p. 62.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, CAB 27/202.

<sup>92</sup> TNA, CAB 27/202.

<sup>93</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Culture in Britain, 1890-1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 18.

<sup>94</sup> Bourke, *Working-Class Culture*, p. 18.

although agricultural workers were excluded. By the start of the 1920s unemployed men could claim 15s. a week which equated to forty per cent of the average wage in 1924, and workers between the ages of sixteen and eighteen could apply for half the adult benefit.<sup>95</sup> As the 1920s progressed so the conditions for payment became more rigid with the requirement for a claimant having to prove that they were actively looking for work being particularly resented.<sup>96</sup> This policy had the support of the Labour Party which appeared to be more concerned about the level of benefits rather than the administration of the insurance scheme itself.<sup>97</sup>

As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, unemployment in the five years before 1914 is considered here because in some respects it set the tone for a conflict that persisted through to 1928. This was the tension between labour exchanges, initially established in 1909 under the BOT, subsequently the MOL, and employment bureaux instituted under the 1910 Choice of Employment Act and run by local education authorities.<sup>98</sup>

In the first decade a number of those involved in youthful employment, including Richard Tawney, Edward Urwick, Cyril Jackson and Henrietta (Nettie) Adler had called for the development of a national system of children's employment committees, working in close association with labour exchanges and elementary schools in each area to help children into employment.<sup>99</sup> The majority report of the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws subsequently recommended that a special organisation be established in connection with the labour exchange to give advice to boys, parents and teachers about employment opportunities after leaving school.<sup>100</sup> But in its report for 1909-1910 the BOE argued that the 1909 Labour Exchanges Act did not effectively address the issue of unemployed persons below the age of

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<sup>95</sup> Bourke, *Working-Class Culture*, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Bourke, *Working-Class Culture*, p. 19.

<sup>97</sup> William Garside, *British Unemployment 1919-1939*, p. 45.

<sup>98</sup> BOE. Education (Choice of Employment) Act, 1910. Regulations providing for grants in aid of local education authorities in England and Wales exercising powers under the Education (Choice of Employment) Act, 1910 [Cd. 7076]

<sup>99</sup> 'Boy Labour and Unemployment,' *The Times*, 14 December 1908, p. 5.

<sup>100</sup> Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909 [Cd 4499] p. 440.

seventeen who were, or should have been, under educational influences. As the Board of Trade had issued special rules to deal with the registration of juvenile applicants the BOE was concerned that local education authorities could no longer legally justify expenditure in assisting children into employment. As a result, the Choice of Employment Act of November 1910 linked the question of employment of young people as closely as possible with local education authorities, while at the same time a BOE report stressed that it wanted local education authorities to cooperate closely with the national scheme of labour exchanges, recognising the de facto association in larger urban environments.<sup>101</sup>

The Choice of Employment Act (1910) had in essence, merely granted official sanction to the many educational and advisory committees already established to help school leavers into the workforce. Many felt it would be a mistake if education authorities exercised their right to establish employment bureaux without full co-operation with BOT labour exchanges. A potential duplication in costs, and because boys once employed were more likely to turn to BOT exchanges when looking for new work, led many to argue that the best way forward for juvenile employment was through BOT exchanges supported by local education authority-backed advisory boards.<sup>102</sup> It was also argued that while education authorities might appear well placed to provide advice to school leavers, the knowledge of pupils was in fact held by teachers who would need to pass on their information to education authority-run bureaux, which was no more efficient than the same information being passed direct to a BOT labour exchange.<sup>103</sup>

Another criticism of the Choice of Employment Act was that it was really only relevant to urban areas. In rural regions like Devon, it was thought there would be difficulty in forming advisory committees and that employment of juveniles would take care of itself. Suggestions

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<sup>101</sup> BOE, report for 1909-1910 [Cd. 5616] p. 38.

<sup>102</sup> Whitehouse, *Problems of Boy Life*, p. 47.

<sup>103</sup> Arthur Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care* (London: P.S. King, 1911), pp. 49,50.

by the BOT and BOE that in implementing the Choice of Employment Act there should be a secretary to liaise between local education authorities, voluntary workers and labour exchanges, were seen as impractical and expensive. In the absence of any formal structure an alternative was for teachers and managers to be encouraged to identify and inform regional or county education authorities of pupils who in exceptional cases, might be found suitable for employment some distance away from their area.<sup>104</sup> The weakness of this proposal was that it depended on the efficiency and diligence of teachers to promote brighter boys to bodies based away from teachers' everyday environments. The BOE was clearly aware of the potential problems in establishing rural juvenile advisory committees because in a circular it referred to the importance of creating committees in urban areas but only 'where possible in country areas.'<sup>105</sup>

The value of all labour bureaux and exchanges became increasingly debatable as employers found it easy to select the relatively few boys they required for skilled employment making both local education authority and BOT exchanges little more than places that employers used to source boys for low-skilled work.<sup>106</sup> This was partly substantiated by figures showing that in the first year of BOT exchanges, 42.74 per cent of the total number of vacancies and 43.7 per cent of the total number of boys placed in work came in the category of conveyancing, which primarily consisted of errand and messenger jobs.<sup>107</sup> This potential weakness in exchanges' operational value was identified in a memorandum circulated during the passage of the 1910 bill which almost appeared to sanction data collection above effective employment delivery when stating that the bill was, 'no remedy for the problem of boy labour (the "blind-alley," etc) to find good places for the best boys ... the most important function of the Labour Exchange ... is to enable a record to be kept of the industrial career of *every* boy

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<sup>104</sup> 'Employment on Leaving School,' *Gloucester Journal*, 6 May 1911, p. 4.

<sup>105</sup> 'Choice of Employment,' *Gloucester Citizen*, 22 August 1911, p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 67.

<sup>107</sup> Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges*, p. 100.

and girl.”<sup>108</sup> Others, like Frederic Keeling were less critical, recognising that exchanges administered by both the BOE and the BOT ‘were of considerable value’ in aiding the placement of juvenile labour in suitable employment, although he recognised the difficulty of affecting employment conditions in the workplace and of exchanges’ ability to directly influence the proportion of boys employed in different types of employment.<sup>109</sup> As Michael Childs has observed of the BOT exchanges, their initial problem was that ‘essentially, they were trying to apply a statist approach to an economic problem that was very much a product of a free market.’<sup>110</sup>

Under the Labour Exchange Act 1909, exchanges were to deal with the registration of jobs and juvenile applicants but were prohibited from registering juvenile applicants where a local education authority had a scheme for employment. Labour exchanges were nevertheless permitted to register positions notified by employers. Exchange duties included the giving of advice to juvenile employment applicants for employment.<sup>111</sup> The role to be played by their special advisory committees was to provide information, advice, and assistance to boys and girls and their parents with respect to the choice of employment.

Following the introduction of the 1910 Choice of Employment Act, the Department of Education sent a memorandum to all its inspectors in December 1910 outlining their obligations. It said that they were accountable:

for giving to boys and girls under 17 years of age assistance with respect to the choice of suitable employment, by means of the collection and the communication of information and the furnishing of advice ... the procedure to be followed ... for securing co-operation between Authorities and Labour Exchanges of the Board of Trade are now under consideration.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges*, p. 94.

<sup>109</sup> Keeling, *Child Labour in the United Kingdom*, p. x.

<sup>110</sup> Childs, *Labour's Apprentices*, p. 67.

<sup>111</sup> TNA. ED 24/248, Labour Exchange Act, 1909. Special Rules with regard to Registration of Juvenile Applicants in England and Wales.

<sup>112</sup> TNA. ED 24/248, Choice of Employment Act 1910 (Memo to Inspectors, December 1910).

The National Education Association, an organisation founded in 1887 as a counter to clerical influence in education before becoming an education lobbying body directed at parliament and the Department of Education,<sup>113</sup> sent a circular to all education committees reinforcing the point that the advisory bodies approved by the BOT under the 1909 Labour Exchange Act were limited to advising the management of labour exchanges. They should not involve themselves in the work of:

advising, directing and controlling school children in their choice of employment, of making investigation into the character of employers or employment, or of making suggestions to employers or employed which the teachers, managers and Education Authorities are in the habit of doing.<sup>114</sup>

In concluding that the responsibility for the launch of a child onto the employment market was the education authority's and not the employment authority's, they stated that 'the educational interests should predominate over any commercial interests.'<sup>115</sup>

From this short summary the kernel of much of the future conflict between the two bodies is visible.<sup>116</sup> Both saw their role as giving information, advice and assistance to boys, girls and their parents, with the education authorities believing they were best placed to provide this service in schools because of their teachers' knowledge of their pupils.

To elicit clarity, the BOE wrote to William Beveridge at the BOT in 1913 asking for his thoughts about issuing a joint report from the BOE and the BOT concerning the workings of the Choice of Employment Act. Beveridge responded positively and in June an internal minute at the BOE included the words, 'I think a joint report would have a good moral affect,

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<sup>113</sup> *London Daily News*, 13 April 1889, p. 5.

<sup>114</sup> 'Labour Exchanges. Duties of Education Authorities,' *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1910, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> *Western Morning News*, 8 August 1910.

<sup>116</sup> For a practical example of the conflict between the two organisations see, David Hirst, 'Juvenile Employment Policy in Edwardian Liverpool: a local study of rivalry between education and employment authorities.' *History of Education*, 26:2 (1997), pp. 187-205.

specifically on the local education authorities who object to any effective co-operation with the Board of Trade Labour Exchanges.’<sup>117</sup> But in 1915 the idea was suspended because of wartime staff shortages which had led to a delay in compiling figures and the plan for a joint definition of bureaux operations died in January 1916. The subject of responsibilities was again raised in 1919 with an internal MOL (previously the BOT) memorandum highlighting the re-emerging antipathy between the two government departments: ‘Certain officers spend a large part of their time in continuing the quarrel; the atmosphere is embittered; development is retarded; public money thrown away.’<sup>118</sup> By December 1919 there were about 150 MOL committees and approximately 90 education authority’s, although the MOL rather caustically insinuated that local education authorities were only interested in placing selected children into good vacancies while they (the MOL) dealt with a whole range of employment in each district.<sup>119</sup>

An internal MOL minute outlining the problems caused by two competing employment exchanges concluded that it might be possible for education authorities to take over the running of juvenile exchanges but under the supervision of the MOL. The note referred to the 1911 compromise between the BOE and BOT which allowed for local officials of employment exchanges to share the work undertaken by an education authority, ‘but in practice this division of functions has not had the happiest results; it has led to duplication of officers, wasteful administration and divided counsels, both centrally and locally.’<sup>120</sup> And referring to the increasing cost of the two schemes, the Committee on the Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure reported that, ‘we view with some concern the rapid increase in the charge involved on national funds, and we think that steps should be taken to replace the Board of

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<sup>117</sup> TNA. ED 46/68. BOE, internal minute.

<sup>118</sup> TNA. LAB 2/240/ED34313/15/1919, Min of Lab, Juvenile Employment Committees, D34313/10/1919, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> TNA. LAB 2/240/ED34313/15/1919.

<sup>120</sup> TNA. LAB 2/240/ED34351/1919. (Jacket ED 34313/15/1919).

Education by the Board of Trade as the contributory authority under the Education Choice of Employment Act.’<sup>121</sup>

The Chelmsford committee report (1921-1923) into the problems arising from the administration of the 1909 Labour Exchanges Act and the 1910 Education (Choice of Employment) Act recommended, however, that the administration of juvenile employment exchanges remained with the education authorities.<sup>122</sup> It proposed that they should also administer the Unemployed Insurance Act (1920) as it applied to all young people between the ages of sixteen and eighteen.<sup>123</sup> Local education authorities agreeing to these recommendations had to contract for five-years with an automatic five-year roll-over unless notice was given after four and a half years.<sup>124</sup> In 1923, a memorandum from the MOL to all local education authorities who had undertaken the running of juvenile employment bureaux and insurance benefits, outlined the method of payment for juvenile unemployment insurance as laid down in the Unemployment Insurance Act (1921). This act had introduced a ‘seeking work’ test for all claimants, and in 1922 a means test was added which further restricted the payment of benefits and in certain cases, such as for single adults living with parents, payment could be denied.<sup>125</sup> The 1921 Act legislated that boys up to eighteen would be covered for twenty-six weeks and their contribution when employed would be 2½d. a week, the employer’s contribution would be 3d. and the State’s 1¾d.<sup>126</sup> The administrative responsibilities of running the scheme were onerous for smaller education authorities and some, like Torquay, having

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<sup>121</sup> TNA. LAB 2/240/ED34399/6/1919.

<sup>122</sup> Devon Archives, Exeter, Juvenile Employment minute book, 1913-1924 (Borough of Torquay), R4582A/2/TC/25. (Loose paper, report of Torquay and district employment committee. December 1921).

<sup>123</sup> Torquay, Juvenile Employment minute book, 1913-1924.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Unemployment insurance. A bill to amalgamate the rates of contribution and the rates of benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, 1920 and 1921, and the Unemployed Workers' Dependents (Temporary Provision) Act, 1921, otherwise to amend the Unemployment Insurance Acts, 1920 and 1921, and to repeal the Unemployed Workers' Dependents (Temporary Provision) Act, 1921, and for purposes connected therewith. III.761, 1922.

<sup>126</sup> House of Commons, *House of Commons Debate*, Unemployment Insurance Act (1920) Amendment Bill. Deb 23 February 1921 vol. 138 cc 937-1097



initially welcomed the proposals decided not to participate and like the rest of Devon subsequently left the running of juvenile employment exchanges to the MOL.

It was not until 1927 that the government finally resolved the long-term dispute, deciding that the responsibility for running the choice of employment work be transferred from the BOE to the MOL as of 1928. The new structure would be supported by a new body the National Advisory Council for Juvenile Employment on which local education authorities would be represented.<sup>127</sup>

It has been shown that many rural local education authorities using the Choice of Employment Act had problems establishing and running employment bureaux, and it is informative to see the contrasting approach from Birmingham. At a meeting of the Birmingham Education Committee in March 1916 a sub-committee report referred to a Juvenile Advisory Committee's proposal to transfer responsibilities from the BOE to the Labour Exchanges Department of the MOL. It claimed about £30,000 per annum was being spent on staffing for juvenile work and that significantly more was spent on providing special accommodation at labour exchanges. The proposed transfer to the Labour Exchanges Department was forecast to reduce expenditure. But the central care committee claimed the scheme established under the Choice of Employment Act was working well and that a transfer to the labour exchange would not deliver any economy if the current level of service was to be maintained. They enlisted the help of their member of parliament to maintain the status quo.<sup>128</sup> The proposed transfer was rejected, and in November 1918 the Education Committee was asked by Birmingham Council to draw up a list of employers whose practices conformed to the Choice of Employment Act requirements.<sup>129</sup> This was perhaps surprising because it followed a report by the Birmingham education committee in December 1917 which said there had been an increasing 'rush' of

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<sup>127</sup> Report of the MOL for 1927 [Cmd. 3090] p. 68.

<sup>128</sup> 'Juvenile Employment Schemes. Problems of Education in Birmingham.' *Birmingham Mail*, 28 March 1916, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> 'Apprenticeship Question.' *Birmingham Mail*, 9 November 1917, p. 3.

school leavers to work in the munitions factories which was a failure of the care committees to satisfactorily advise children on the wider range of employment opportunities open to them. The juvenile exchange had failed to meet all the requirements of those under fifteen, and many boys aged sixteen and seventeen in semi-skilled work had been unemployed for some time. It was claimed this was due to their experience of high wages ranging between 30s. and 50s. a week which they sought (unsuccessfully) to replicate when changing jobs. The juvenile exchange placed 10,965 in jobs in 1916 and 11,473 in 1917.<sup>130</sup>

The value of labour exchanges was initially questioned in Devon but it was nevertheless proposed by the Devon County Education Authority that juvenile advisory committees to advise BOT employment exchanges be established in Newton Abbot, Exeter, Torquay, Honiton, Tiverton and Barnstable, 'to give advice and assistance to boys and girls and their parents with regard to the choice of employment and other matters bearing there-on.'<sup>131</sup> In Plymouth it was agreed an advisory committee be established under BOT auspices but accepted that the initiative did not prejudice the education authority's right to start an exchange of its own at a later date.<sup>132</sup> An arrangement also linked the outlying districts of South Devon and Cornwall with the Plymouth exchange, administered by travelling clerks visiting different centres on fixed days of the week.<sup>133</sup> The BOT juvenile advisory committee was established in 1911 with the co-operation of local education authorities and in the first year 10,000 applications for employment were made, 3,404 vacancies notified with 2,219 filled.<sup>134</sup>

Nationally, doubts continued about the value to young people of all labour exchanges. A mid-1920's report into the personal circumstances and industrial history of 3,331 boys and

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<sup>130</sup> 'Welfare of the Young,' *Birmingham Mail*, 18 December 1917, p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> 'Juvenile Labour. Advisory Committees for Devonshire Towns,' *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 18 July 1910, p. 6.

<sup>132</sup> 'Labour Bureau. Plymouth Advisory Committee,' *Western Morning News*, 27 August 1910, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> For a description of its operation; 'Devonport and Cornwall branches,' *Western Morning News* 4 May 1910, p. 4.

<sup>134</sup> 'The Labour Exchange,' *Western Morning News*, 10 January 1911, p. 8.

2,703 girls registered for employment found that a ratio of five boys in eight found their own employment, two were assisted by relatives and only one found a position through an employment exchange or other organisation. Reasons given were that there was a lack of sympathy and understanding of juvenile problems by exchange staff, and that young lads believed they were better served by waiting outside the factory gates.<sup>135</sup> In his analysis of the experience of young people entering the workplace, Colin Pooley concluded that, ‘especially in the 1920s and 1930s, family ties were the main route into paid employment for both young men and women;’ a conclusion which appears to contradict the previous analysis, suggesting the strength of self-identified work.<sup>136</sup> It does, however, appear to be a matter of semantics because as Pooley’s research indicates, the level of influence that parents asserted varied substantially and it is quite easy to see how in response to the investigations in 1926, adolescent boys might have downplayed family input, particularly when it could loosely have been termed as influence rather than concrete job delivery.

A report on juveniles in employment, commissioned by the MOL in 1919, highlighted the need for a restriction in the hours of work for those in occupations not regulated by the Factory and Workshops Acts.<sup>137</sup> The war had decreased the number of hours worked by juveniles because of lighting restrictions and shortage of supplies, and it was anticipated post-war hours would increase. It was concluded that regional variations resulted from a lack of state regulation and because juveniles ‘do not participate in the advantages obtained under trade agreements.’ Most juveniles (milk and van boys excepted) had a half day per week, from 1.00 p.m., and a short annual holiday but without pay and the report concluded that, ‘where work is unskilled and without prospect, youth is robbed of all incentive to learn and advance.’ The

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<sup>135</sup> Roker, *Economica*, No., 18 (1926), pp. 366-368.

<sup>136</sup> Colin Pooley, “My father found it for me”: changing experiences of entering the workforce in twentieth-century urban Britain, *Urban History*, 42:2 (2015) pp. 290-308.

<sup>137</sup> TNA, LAB 2/822/ED34364/2017. Reference also applicable to the subsequent information and data from the 1919 report.

published hours did not include meal-times which ‘were usually adequate,’ although van boys were compelled to take their meals while travelling. Substantiating the regional variations mentioned in the report, Table 6.3 compares the South-West with the Midlands and it is seen that in most of the unregulated jobs, juveniles worked for longer hours in the south west for reasons that are not immediately clear.

**Table 6. 3.** Hours per week by occupation.

	South-West*	Midlands
Office Work	42	n/a
Errand	48.5	48.5
Van Guard	52.5	46.5
Shop	46.5	50
Grocer	50	48
Baker	55	50
Butcher	45	47
Dairy/Milk	55	n/a
Tailors	46	44
Drapers	50	46
Druggists	50	44
Warehouse	47	42
Restaurants/Cafes	51	50
Clubs/Hotel	60	56
Domestic	60	n/a
Agriculture	n/a	n/a
Building	53	n/a

\*The South-West included Hampshire and Gloucestershire and all counties to the south and west.

In addition to the breakdown of hours comparing work-time between occupations, the job descriptions, below, highlight both the benefits and drawbacks as they affected young workers.

*Errand boys:* Their health frequently suffered ‘owing to the lifting and carrying of excessive weights’ and ‘exposure to weather sometimes necessitates a juvenile giving up the occupation on account of not being able to procure a suitable outfit.’

*Van boys:* The report stressed that this occupation gave no training and offered no prospects and because of the irregular hours made attendance at continuation classes or clubs impossible.

*Shop assistants:* 'The conditions in smaller shops are sometimes poor and the close confinement for many hours is therefore bad.'

*Grocers:* While conditions were reported as being usually good there were accounts that many boys were replaced at fifteen by cheaper labour and if they were kept on it was suggested they became too old to enter any other occupation.

*Bakers:* It was claimed that the 'unnatural' heat and the lifting of heavy weights had a bad effect on the health of boys working in this employment.

*Butchers:* The occupation was generally seen as healthy and there also appear to have been good perks such as the weekly gift of a joint.

*Dairy work:* This work was also seen as generally healthy despite long hours. It was indicated that this was because dairy men gave their boys milk to drink.

*Newsboys, booksellers and stationers:* It was reported that boys sometimes suffered from exposure to the weather. It was noted, without explanation, that in the S.W. they often had to work on Sundays for at least three hours. 'Newsboy work' (newspaper sellers) was generally carried out by boys still at school.

*Druggist shops:* The work mainly consisted of delivering prescribed medicines to patients. In addition to permanent boy workers it was intimated that much of the evening work was carried out by school attending juveniles. It was suggested the only way for progression was through study but this was effectively impossible as 'regular attendance at Evening Classes was out of the question.' There were also apprentice workers generally taken on from secondary schools with significantly shorter hours than those of errand boys;

their presence also prevented upward progression for less qualified boys, thus defining classic blind-alley employment.

*Warehouse* work was viewed as generally healthy except for those working in grain, flour and wastepaper warehouses where the work was heavy.

*Restaurants/cafes*: Long hours in the kitchen were considered very bad because of the heat and confinement: 'The worst conditions occur in small seaside shops and cafes in the season ... evening work is common and the effect on health is bad.'

*Clubs and hotels*: The work was considered irregular and it was felt unlikely to be of any long-term benefit to those employed. In addition, as the table shows, juveniles in this type of work tended to work for longer hours than in many other occupations.

*Building work* was viewed generally as being good employment often providing reasonable prospects for advancement.<sup>138</sup>

In 1926 the MOL reported there was an increasing reluctance of boys under eighteen to take jobs as errand or messenger boys and other jobs with few or no prospects of permanent employment.<sup>139</sup> The report went on to acknowledge that 'much of the employment boys ... were seeking was of an unsatisfactory character,' adding that while these jobs often provided some security of tenure they had no prospects or training for a defined occupation.<sup>140</sup> The biggest employers of insured boys were the distributive trades, coal mining, building, engineering (including iron and steel founding), cotton and printing.<sup>141</sup> The 1928 MOL report, reflecting the changing industrial landscape, showed that the number of boys employed in the

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<sup>138</sup> For understanding of the employment of girls and young women following the First World War see, Selina Todd, *Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women's Entry to Employment in Inter-War England*, *Twentieth Century British History* 15:2 (2004), pp. 119-142.

<sup>139</sup> Report of the MOL for 1926 [Cmd.2856] p. 70.

<sup>140</sup> Report of the MOL for 1926, p. 73.

<sup>141</sup> Report of the MOL for 1926, p. 70.

construction and maintenance of motor cars for the first time exceeded the number employed in cotton.<sup>142</sup>

In summary, the First World War briefly had a major impact on the employment of boys under eighteen. New opportunities arose, wages soared, and as a result lifestyle often improved significantly. But did this four or five-year timespan demonstrably change the course of employment policy for adolescents? Arguably not. The 1918 Education Act in raising the compulsory school-leaving age took all those under fourteen permanently out of the full-time labour market but this was not a response to wartime issues, rather it was a continuation of the education debate that had been on-going since 1902. Furthermore, a major concern of Edwardian reformers was the gap between boys leaving school and the point they could secure an apprenticeship at fifteen or sixteen; the two or three years that left many boys vulnerable to blind-alley employment.<sup>143</sup> As argued by Garside, Todd, and others, this remained a problem for reformers in the 1920s and beyond, a point acknowledged in the mid-twenties when it was recognised that for some considerable time industry was unlikely to absorb all the boys of fourteen to sixteen entering the labour market each year.

Some moves were made to ameliorate the position of young workers. The creation of juvenile unemployment centres and the labour transference scheme, although ultimately only marginally successful, were serious efforts to address youth unemployment. But proposals like including boys of fourteen and fifteen in employment insurance were strongly rejected by a cash-strapped treasury. This exaggerated blind-alley employment as these youngsters were attractive to employers because of their relatively low wages, and with no requirement for insurance stamps. In addition, the ongoing friction between the MOL and BOE over the

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<sup>142</sup> Report of the MOL for 1928 [Cmd.3333] p. 42.

<sup>143</sup> For the views of the TUC towards the employment of adolescents, apprenticeships and proposals to improve the link between elementary school and employment, see Chapter 7, pp. 214-215.

running of juvenile employment exchanges highlighted the futility and expense of running what were effectively competing services; services that because of the failure of those under sixteen to register due to their omission from insurance, did little to aid younger workers. Putting aside longer term negative implications of blind-alley employment, most adolescents in work enjoyed significantly higher wages than their pre-war equivalents, and for those under sixteen, while their aspirations might have been uninspired, their low employment costs ensured few were out of work for any length of time.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Todd, *Flappers and Factory Lads*, p. 722.



## Chapter 7: Apprenticeship, 1901-1930

In her analysis of nineteenth century children and child labour, Jane Humphries proposes that apprenticeship deserves the attention of historians because of its part in early British economic growth and ‘precocious structural change.’<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, she suggests it was instrumental in growing moves away from agricultural employment to opportunities in urban locations. But as this chapter demonstrates, as industrial growth and factory production evolved in the early twentieth century it effectively killed off the formal, early age employment structure that had played such an important role in early industrial economic development. Nevertheless, in the same way as scrutiny of apprenticeship is valuable for the nineteenth century, investigation of its later incarnation in the twentieth is equally important as it reflected changing forms of employment and the emergence of new occupations.

The decline, decay or breakup of the apprenticeship system has been described as central to the issue of the boy labour problem in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain.<sup>2</sup> Jocelyn Dunlop argued that the traditional form of apprenticeship effectively came to an end at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the repeal of the Statute of Artificers in 1814.<sup>3</sup> Penal clauses relating to the requirement for seven years apprenticeships were repealed which, with the emergence of new markets and new trades reflected the inappropriateness of the original Elizabethan act to the nineteenth century. It has also been suggested that the repeal of the statute indicated state withdrawal from all responsibility for training and employment supervision, something not reversed until the late-Victorian education acts making attendance at school compulsory.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour*, p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Hendrick, *Images of Youth*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> O. Jocelyn Dunlop, *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 240.

<sup>4</sup> Reginald Bray, ‘The apprenticeship question,’ *The Economic Journal*, 19:75 (1909), pp. 404-415.

The censuses of 1901 and 1911 gave some detail about the level and type of employment for boys over the age of ten across England and Wales, and within counties and county boroughs. The problem with data on employment from the two census surveys is that they are not directly comparable and in many cases the figures themselves were unreliable as qualified in the census itself. Relating to the number of juveniles employed as apprentices the 1911 census warns that, ‘no direct instruction was given on the schedule for apprentices to be returned as such, and the numbers which were returned were doubtless below the actual numbers.’<sup>5</sup> This lack of accurate data is a problem because important to the debate at the turn of the twentieth centuries was the question of whether or not the traditional form of apprenticeship still existed and if it did not, what if anything had replaced it? Contemporary observers often agreed that traditional apprenticeships had effectively ended, Arnold Freeman writing: ‘we are obliged to confess that those occupations which can be called “skilled” or in which apprenticeship is possible, are exceedingly few in number.’<sup>6</sup> Arthur Greenwood concluded that the apprenticeship system ‘is undoubtedly obsolete,’<sup>7</sup> and Edward Urwick observed that, ‘we cannot hope much from a revival of the old system of apprenticing.’<sup>8</sup>

A challenge for this chapter which covers the years 1901-1930, is that while a considerable weight of contemporary writing exists about apprenticeship before the First World War, less was produced in the 1920s and as Alan McKinlay notes, there has also been a dearth of academic research into the development of apprenticeship post-war First World War.<sup>9</sup> Even noted work on employment between the wars often ignores the apprenticeship issue altogether or mention it only briefly. There were, however, government figures, not least through the

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<sup>5</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911 giving details of Areas, Houses, Families or separate occupiers, and Population: Vol. X. Occupations and Industries (Population: Census Returns, 1911) [Cd. 7018, 7019] p. cxlix.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 178.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Greenwood, *Juvenile Labour Exchanges and After-Care* (London: King, 1911), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Urwick, *Studies of Boy Life in our Cities*, p. 280.

<sup>9</sup> Alan McKinlay, ‘From Industrial Serf to Wage-labourer: The 1937 Apprentice Revolt in Britain.’ *International Review of Social History*, 31:1 (1986), pp. 2-18.

annual reports of the MOL containing significant detail about apprenticeships in 1925-1926, and this chapter includes references to this and other sources.

It is worthwhile considering some of the evidence that appears to support widely held contemporary views about the demise of apprenticeships before considering their status in the early twentieth century. Two government reports in the 1880s, the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction and the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, cast light on the perceived status of apprentices. Evidence from a number of trades and industries to the 1884 Commission on Technical Instruction raised questions about the ongoing nature of traditional apprenticeship. In the building trade it was suggested that a change in tendering practices for work had been a major contributor to decline. It had been accepted practice to complete work before presenting the final price of a project, a system that allowed for the absorption of the costs in employing apprentices, but in the mid-Victorian period competitive, fixed-price tendering became more usual. The subsequent pressure to deliver an agreed price dictated a reluctance to carry the cost of apprentices.<sup>10</sup> In engineering it was claimed that a great number of young men were not apprenticed at all, with evidence being given that there were now only 'so called' apprenticeships, the old system of apprenticeship by indentures having almost entirely fallen out of use.<sup>11</sup> In the shoe and boot making trades it was said that while boys were still employed, it was only in the role of putting the soles onto machine manufactured uppers, and that the role of apprentices had died out almost completely. In both cabinet making and in carriage building, the latter a trade which was declining in the face of competition from the railways, traditional apprenticeships were reported as being in terminal decline.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Second report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction. Minutes of evidence, &c. relating to England, &c. 1884 [C. 3981-II], Vol. III. Appendix 4. See minutes; 3829, 3858, 3920.

<sup>11</sup> [C. 3981-II] Vol. III. Appendix 4. Minutes; 3829, 3858, 3920.

<sup>12</sup> [C. 3981-II] Vol. III. Appendix 4. Minutes; 3829, 3858, 3920.

More graphic evidence was provided by workers' trade and union representatives to the 1886 Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry. While the length of apprenticeships was reported as often being the traditional seven years, in many trades and companies the number of years had fallen to six, five or even less and the level of formal instruction was claimed to be frequently poor or effectively non-existent.<sup>13</sup> It was inferred that many employers cared little for formal training, leaving apprentices' instruction to the goodwill of foremen and ordinary working men who in many cases saw apprentices as a threat to their own employment and, therefore, virtually ignored them.<sup>14</sup> Formal indentured apprenticeships were increasingly rare with most only verbally agreed, and with apprentices vulnerable to dismissal if trade became depressed. The TUC noted that relaxation of formal apprenticeships had only benefited the employers. Their annual report in 1912 highlighted that under contract law any breach was resolved by the instigation of a civil action for damages.<sup>15</sup> Apprenticeships were exempt from this law under the 1875 Employers and Workmen Act which made prison an option for magistrates sentencing an apprentice for breaching his apprenticeship. A breach by an employer was unlikely to be contested because parents were normally too poor to fund litigation. The TUC demanded that these employment issues should come under union control, but unions were often seen as restricting the use of apprenticeships, by passing rules limiting their number in given trades or workshops.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between unions, apprentices and younger workers after the First World War, is considered later in this chapter, but criticism of unions' restriction of apprentice numbers early in the century was a little unfair because agreed apprentice worker ratios were frequently breached by employers. The New Block Chain Makers Association, for example,

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<sup>13</sup> Second report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the depression of trade and industry. Minutes of evidence and appendix. Part I.1886 [C.4715] pp. 7-98. Minutes 2159, 2246.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Childs, *Labours Apprentices*, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> TUC Annual Report, 1912, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> 'The Apprenticeship System,' *Leamington Spa Courier*, 31 March 1905, p. 4.

reported that while it was agreed that companies should employ one apprentice to every ten workmen, in many cases the ratio had been as high as four or five apprentices to three or four workmen, substantiating the often heard complaint of apprentices merely being used as cheap labour.<sup>17</sup> Union response to criticism of their attitude to apprenticeships is epitomised by the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers who in 1907 wrote that,

It is a cruel mockery to tell us to revert to old-fashioned apprenticeship or to improved methods of technical education as having any bearing on the question. Our unemployed members are men who have served apprenticeship and many of them are otherwise technically trained. Carpenters, shipwrights and mechanics of all sorts are standing in the market-place even in larger numbers, and are also duly trained and educated.<sup>18</sup>

In Birmingham the Trades Council considered a proposal to ‘establish more broadly the apprenticeship system’ but objectors claimed that indentured apprenticeships did not suit all boys.<sup>19</sup> The argument was that after a few months a boy might find himself unsuited to the trade and being tied down by his indenture might become ‘a menace to the other workers.’<sup>20</sup> Birmingham concluded that their preferred training route lay through trade schools. It was also noticeable how many jobs that might once have been advertised as apprenticeships now simply sought youths or young men; ‘Youth wanted for architect’s office - taste for drawing,’ ‘Youths wanted to learn Moulding,’ ‘Youth ... in the office of Fire and Accident Insurance Co., for a smart junior; one about leaving school preferred.’<sup>21</sup> These examples of employment practices negated the requirement for long indentures and provided greater flexibility for employers. Ultimately it was felt by many in Birmingham that, ‘it was evident apprenticeship, as it had hitherto been known, had ceased to be a custom in the majority of the industries of the city.’<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Prosperity in the Chain Trade,’ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 July 1900, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in, W.H.Beveridge, *Unemployment*, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Birmingham Trades Council,’ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 May 1914.

<sup>20</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 May 1914.

<sup>21</sup> Advertisements in *Birmingham Daily Post*, May, June 1914.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Apprenticeship Question,’ *Birmingham Mail*, 26 November 1918, p. 3.

A clear example of technical evolution within an industry that impacted directly and negatively on the availability of apprenticeships was the mercantile marine. In the thirty years from 1874 to 1904 the number of working apprentices fell from 15,000 to just 400; the main reason being the decline of sailing vessels and the rise of steam.<sup>23</sup> The generally agreed principle of maintaining separate accommodation for apprentices (from ordinary seamen) was also deemed expensive, and it was held that apprentices within their first two years did not contribute to profit. The length of mercantile apprenticeships varied between ship-owners, but the average was for three to five years starting at the age of sixteen.<sup>24</sup>

The evidence from these examples, while not conclusive, would appear to go some way to understand why early-twentieth century observers felt that apprenticeships, if not dead, may have been in terminal decline.

More recently historians have questioned the basis of the alleged decline. Kenneth Brown contends that some economic arguments, specifically the demise of apprenticeships and the broken link with the acquisition of skills, do not hold water.<sup>25</sup> He argues that the relationship between the supply and demand of juvenile labour varied from region to region and he points to the still vibrant apprenticeships in the metal work and engineering industries. And Keith McClelland found that, 'in the end a shop floor practical training in which apprenticeship remained of central importance continued to be the most favoured means of transmitting skills in the engineering and shipbuilding industries.'<sup>26</sup> Charles More also argues that a decline in apprenticeships was not automatically the result of increasing technological

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<sup>23</sup> Merchant Shipping: Boy Seamen (Supply and Training of) Vol. II. Minutes of Evidence, Appendices, Analysis, and Index. 1907 [Cd. 3723] p. 170.

<sup>24</sup> Merchant Shipping: Boy Seamen. [Cd. 3723]. See evidence from a number of witnesses. Also press reports claimed that while 'thousands of British youths were looking in vain' for healthy employment, forty thousand foreigners and forty two thousand Lascars were serving in the mercantile marine which raised the questioned about the state of British shipping and the 'lack of a proper means of training.' *Western Morning News*, 9 October 1907, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Brown, 'Industry and Services: Employment and Unemployment,' p. 307.

<sup>26</sup> Keith McClelland cited by Michael Sanderson in *Education and Economic Decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s*, ed., Michael Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 33

changes, but that in some cases it was simply the result of a decline in demand for certain products as fashions changed. He cites the example of ribbon weavers in Coventry where there was no deskilling of the workforce but a fall in demand which led to a decline in the number of weavers.<sup>27</sup>

It could be argued, therefore, that contemporary visions of apprenticeships in terminal decline was over-stated and that the census warning of under reporting was justified. In many industries, the existence of apprentices appeared to be robust. Table 7.1 shows those boys under twenty-one working in industries where registered apprenticeships were highest as a percentage of those employed. These figures are from a total of 121,678 returned as apprentices in England and Wales.

**Table 7.1.** Apprentices: per cent of occupied boys under 21 in England and Wales. (Census: 1911).

		(totals)
Shipwrights	70.3%	2857
Boiler makers	51.1%	4167
Engineering and machine making	50.1%	13,907
Carpenters and Joiners	47.2%	10,624
Erecters, Fitters, Turners	46.3%	15,881
Pattern makers	42.5%	1412
Plumbers	41.8%	5678
Printers	30.4%	8666

There were other trades where the census warning of a possible understatement of apprentice numbers could be applicable. Boot and shoe-makers only returned 10.5 per cent of under twenty-one-year-old employees as apprentices, although increasing mechanisation regarding the cutting of leather uppers for shoes and boots probably accounted for this, and the emerging business of motor car mechanics perhaps surprisingly returned just 25.5 per cent. The possibly

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<sup>27</sup> Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 47

unreliable census figures nevertheless appear to support the contention that apprenticeships persisted in those industries requiring training in manufacturing or applied skills.

While the perpetuation of apprenticeships might be confirmed, the overall number of boys over twelve and under twenty-one employed in other than formal apprenticeships was substantially higher. As noted in the 1909 Royal Commission, the demand for efficient labourers and factory workers could be measured in the millions while the demand for skilled labour was measurable in the thousands.<sup>28</sup> Even in manufacturing centres like Birmingham where apprenticeships in some manufacturing industries appeared to be still healthy, the actual numbers reported as employed as such were small. In his 1914 report into the condition of boy labour in Birmingham, Arnold Freeman concluded that most boys were engaged in occupations that required a minimum of skill.<sup>29</sup> He observed that it was questionable if as much as a quarter of adult labour in Birmingham was 'skilled' and that with many of the manufacturing operations now being 'picked up even in a few days' the requirement for years of laborious learning was disappearing.<sup>30</sup> Urwick noted that even in the manufacturing industries the introduction of machinery and the 'consequent division and sub division of labour have made a long term of apprenticeship unnecessary and useless.'<sup>31</sup> This tone was reflected by much of the press which, in addition to calling for the end of traditional apprenticeships, observed that it was time to see if a form of apprenticeship could be created that more accurately reflected 'present day requirements.'<sup>32</sup> In a letter to *The Times* in 1908 many leading social reformers, wrote that,

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<sup>28</sup> 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX. Report by Mr. Cyril Jackson on boy labour together with a memorandum from the General Post Office on the conditions of employment of telegraph messengers [Cd. 4632] p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 180.

<sup>30</sup> Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 165.

<sup>31</sup> Urwick, *Study of Boy Life in our Cities*, p. 116.

<sup>32</sup> 'Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment' *Western Times*, 20 March 1909, p. 2.



Apprenticeship ... is no longer a method of training which is in harmony with modern industrial conditions as they prevail in most of the great staple manufacturers of the country. Apart from the undoubted advantages which apprenticeship has had in the past, and might still have in different industrial conditions, it seems wise to recognise economic and industrial forces which appear to be inevitable<sup>33</sup>

A challenge in comprehending the apprenticeship question is to understand the meaning of 'skill'; how was it defined and how long did it take to obtain it? Charles More has suggested that a definition of working skill is merely the possession of some manual skill and a little knowledge, in which case many workers possessed 'skill.'<sup>34</sup> But a 'skilled worker' should have a considerable quantity of one or the other which might be obtained through apprenticeship or as determined by some other scientific measure.<sup>35</sup> In this sense the ability to operate new industrial machinery within a short period of time almost certainly required an element of knowledge but it could not reasonably be called 'skilled work' under the proposed definition. Michael Sanderson advocates that the replacement of craftsmen who had developed all-round skills by mechanics using machine tools and responsible only for part of the manufacturing process, together with the emergence of interchangeable parts that saw the replacement of skilled fitters by semi-skilled assemblers, meant in many industries, 'the role of the apprentice was being degraded to cheap labour,' a view substantially supported by the evidence to the two 1880s commissions.<sup>36</sup> The point is apposite because while the 1911 census warned that the recorded number of apprenticeships is 'doubtless below the actual numbers,' it could be argued that in the traditional sense the figures were in fact an overstatement. This is because it is possible that in the absence of old-style apprenticeship contracts, employers and society came to regard the more limited skills acquired by boys on the new industrial machinery as being

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<sup>33</sup> 'Boy Labour and Unemployment,' *The Times*, 14 December 1908, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Education and economic decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 17.

comparable to those previously accumulated over five or seven years in an era of owner-craftsman workshops.

An example was seen in the brush-making industry of the West Midlands where new machinery meant the mechanical shaping of brush bristles by a single operator could deliver in one hour the same number as previously produced in one day by hand.<sup>37</sup> The successful operation of the machinery was described as being the result of ‘a long apprenticeship’ but whether this skill required a number of years to be acquired and if it provided the employee with wider future employment opportunities is doubtful.<sup>38</sup> The drilling of holes in the brush stocks had been a male occupation but the introduction of the new machinery led to the process becoming a female preserve with production increasing from less than ten thousand a day to over 100,000.<sup>39</sup> Richard Tawney provided another example from the engineering world when he surmised that by the beginning of the twentieth century there were three definitions of apprentice; ‘premium apprentices,’ those that wanted to continue on into the higher levels of industry, ‘privileged apprentices,’ those who would move from department to department accumulating a wide understanding of their trade, and ‘ordinary apprentices’ who he identified as being ‘the vast majority.’<sup>40</sup> This last group Tawney recognised as those likely to have worked as fitters, erectors and turners and once employed in one of these disciplines seldom moved on. If the largest number of claimed engineering apprenticeships were in this last group and if it is accepted that they were not really apprenticeships in the traditional sense and discount them from the reported figures, then census numbers for apprentices would have been too high rather than too low. It might be reasonable to assume that if the arguable overstating of apprentices in this instance, as with the brush making example, was replicated by other machine-orientated manufacturing companies, it would confirm the actual number of reported

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Brushmaking’ *Walsall Advertiser*, 8 August 1903, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Brushmaking’ *Walsall Advertiser*, 8 August 1903, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Brushmaking’ *Walsall Advertiser*, 8 August 1903, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> *The Economic Journal*, 19:76 (1909), pp. 517-537, (p. 521).

apprenticeships were exaggerated. So, without being sure how employers in manufacturing industries viewed the acquisition of skill by sixteen and seventeen-year olds operating new machine tools, and how they subsequently reported the role in the census, it is difficult to be sure if apprenticeships continued in good health or were decaying.

To summarise the confusion, a memorandum from Birmingham to the 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress stated; ‘everyone agrees the old apprenticeship system is dead. As a result, everyone has his own idea as to what an apprentice and a learner are hence, more confusion.’<sup>41</sup>The broad question of definition is, therefore, the major issue in determining the status of apprenticeships. Like Tawney, journalist and author Norman Dearle understood the changing character of apprenticeships and while specifically addressing London, his categorisation was reflective of Tawney’s.<sup>42</sup> Dearle recognised the continuation of old-style apprenticeship by indenture but suggested that by the beginning of the twentieth century they were only used in smaller trades. *Punch* had a view on the quality of apprenticeship training in these circumstances, as shown in Figure 7.1.

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<sup>41</sup> 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX [Cd. 4632] p. 176.

<sup>42</sup> Norman Dearle, *Industrial Training* (London: Orchard House, 1914), p. 57.

**Figure 7.1.** Plumber (to apprentice).

"Wot! You 'aven't forgotten none o' your tools? You'll make a fine plumber, I don't think!" Cartoon by Lunt, *Punch*, 23 February 1921, p.6.

Image has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.

In larger industries, like engineering, boys were often employed on a more informal or verbal basis, while another group were employed to work and learn but with no agreement that any formal training would be provided. From a distance it might reasonably be concluded the instruction provided to informally employed apprentices constituted apprenticeships in a more modern form, particularly as verbal agreements were often held to have the same legal weight as those of indentured apprenticeships.<sup>43</sup> Dearle concluded, 'it is, indeed, inevitable that under

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<sup>43</sup> More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 48.

modern conditions there should be a variety of methods of teaching trades, since no one device can fit all sorts and conditions of employment.’<sup>44</sup> In these circumstances the census probably did understate the numbers, so one might conclude that some observers writing early in the twentieth century were unduly influenced by their understanding of what traditional apprenticeship had been. Others, in acknowledging the changing recruitment and training environment of early twentieth century Britain recognised that ‘the assertion that apprenticeship is dead may be the result of a too hasty diagnosis.’<sup>45</sup> So with a working definition of what More refers to as genuine skill one might concur with the census warning of ‘understating’ and agree with those like Brown and McClelland who have argued that the death of apprenticeships in the first two decades of the twentieth century has been overstated.<sup>46</sup>

In 1909 the *Western Times* reported that Winston Churchill, speaking as President of the Board of Trade, accepted there was a damaging period between the time when the state had spent significant sums on education and when youths could make a positive contribution to the economy of the country.<sup>47</sup> But it was also recognised that as well as the rapidly changing face of British industry many young people were now opposed to the idea of tying themselves down for a number of years. There was also the charge that in many poor families the potential income from a working boy outweighed any inclination to guide them towards apprenticeships, even with the potential of improved longer-term employment opportunities. Freeman observed that parents would ‘incessantly’ press their sons to bring in more money while at the same time boys saw little wrong in changing jobs if they could earn a bit more pay.<sup>48</sup> It might be, however, that this was a position only pertinent to the end of the Edwardian era, something that changed after the First World War because, without being too precise about the definition of an

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<sup>44</sup> Dearle, *Industrial Training*, p. 53.

<sup>45</sup> Dearle, *Industrial Training*, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment’ *Western Times*, 20 March 1909, p. 2

<sup>48</sup> Freeman, *Boy Life Labour*, p. 191.

apprenticeship, later research seems to indicate that the greater number of apprenticeships came as a result of parental and family influence, with those obtained through nascent employment exchanges being very few.<sup>49</sup> Elucidation of this is given later in the chapter with a fuller analysis of apprenticeships in major industries during the 1920s.

At the beginning of the century the increasing mechanisation of industry, the gap between school leaving and the normal recruitment age for apprenticeships, together with the desire of both boys and their families to earn more money more quickly, was leading to the development of a workforce substantially consisting of semi-skilled workers. Michael Childs observes that this led to young men entering the workforce taking on the role of ‘learner’, which without the need for contractual arrangements and the requirement for employers to teach, meant a more informal form of trade training and a more flexible youth workforce. The role paid more to the boy than he would have earned as an old-style apprentice leaving him free to move between jobs as economic or industrial circumstances dictated. Childs describes the role with its less structured form of training as being ‘the industrial trainee of the future.’<sup>50</sup> This view was shared by William Beveridge when he observed that with the ‘development of trades and processes to which apprenticeship had never been applied, there has come a break-up in the continuity of industrial life.’<sup>51</sup> Alan McKinlay argues that the demand for high volume mass production during the war not only disrupted the skilled labour supply but ‘accelerated the long-term trend towards the disintegration of formal apprenticeships ... and massively accelerated informal methods of skill acquisition.’

At the end of the war, with its disruption to employment structures, the status of apprenticeships emerged as an issue of increasing importance. There was concern about the level of pay rates because it was believed that serving apprentices would be unwilling to return

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<sup>49</sup> E. Llewelyn Lewis. *The Children of the Unskilled* (London: P. S. King. 1924), p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Childs, ‘Boy Labour in Late Victorian and Edwardian England and the remaking of the Working Class’ *Journal of Social History*, 23:4 (1990), p. 789.

<sup>51</sup> William Beveridge. *Unemployment*, p. 125

to their pre-war wages. The result was the Interrupted Apprenticeship Scheme whereby the government undertook to supplement wages, up to one third of a journeyman's wage, depending on qualifying terms,<sup>52</sup> including that an apprentice still had at least a year of his original training to run and that the apprentice was learning a skilled trade before enlistment.<sup>53</sup> The MOL described the scheme as helping young men,

not merely in return for the sacrifices they made for the country, but also in the interests of the nation. We cannot afford to allow partially-trained men to drift into the ranks of the unskilled, into which many would have been forced to drift, if there had been no such assistance forthcoming.<sup>54</sup>

Interim industrial councils were set up by many industries to manage the post-war employment of juvenile workers although there were industries where no such committees existed.<sup>55</sup> But by January 1920 there were around thirty-nine interrupted apprenticeship schemes in existence, administered locally through employment exchanges and covering between 700 and 800 trades, underpinned by a general scheme established for less organised industries.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately around 45,000 apprentices were accepted including 16,000 in engineering, 7,500 in building, 6,000 in printing and 2,000 in shipbuilding.<sup>57</sup> There were also about 2,000 apprentices for whom an employer could not be found, usually because an original employer had gone out of business or because no suitable company could be found.<sup>58</sup> The scheme did not allow for those boys who would normally have become apprentices before the age of eighteen but did not do so

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<sup>52</sup> *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* 3 January 1920, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Commemorating 100 years of apprenticeships (Gov.UK, 28 November 2014), <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commemorating-100-years-of-apprenticeships>> research conducted by Krista Cowman, *Apprenticeship in Britain c.1890-1920*, (2014), p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Cowman, *Apprenticeships in Britain c.1890-1920*.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, LAB/2/240/ED34351/1919. 'Enclosure to Circular Minute 12/1920' Ministry of Labour, Employment Department. ED 34313/15/1919.

<sup>56</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 3 January 1920, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> Cowman, *Apprenticeships in Britain c.1890-1920*.

<sup>58</sup> *Western Daily Press*, 3 January 1920, p. 7.

because they expected to be called up, and so post-war they were consigned to employment as unskilled labour.<sup>59</sup>

The MOL also renewed earlier debates about the nature of apprenticeships and training, the ministry's parliamentary secretary suggesting that 'the ordinary apprenticeship system in private works, with the exception of a few large firms, is grotesquely inefficient.'<sup>60</sup> And echoing pre-war concern about the apparent decline of conventional apprenticeships the relevance of indentures was queried, and for boys remaining at school until the age of sixteen the question was posed: 'should the length of traditional apprenticeship schemes be reduced?'<sup>61</sup> Evidence given to a select committee in 1922 was clear, that seven-year apprenticeships for some trades was too long because only three of the years were effectively given over to training; the remaining years were simply 'marking time.'<sup>62</sup>

In 1925/6, eighteen per cent of apprentices were indentured for seven years, twenty-nine per cent for six years and around forty-eight per cent for five years.<sup>63</sup> The long-standing concern about the period between leaving school at fourteen and starting an apprenticeship was also addressed by questioning if it was possible to provide employment within a trade until a juvenile was old enough to transfer into a formal apprenticeship. In a gesture to the disquiet that apprenticeships had effectively been a source of cheap labour it was also questioned how provision should be made to secure the maximum knowledge of an industry for apprentices and reflecting the trade union position, explored more fully later in the chapter, it was asked if the proportion of apprentices to journeymen should be restricted.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ministry of Labour. Committee on Re-employment of Ex-Service Men. Interim report. 1920, [Cmd 951], p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Training and Employment of Disabled Ex-Service Men. House of Commons paper number 170, vol.6, 1922, p.154.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, LAB/2/240/ED34351/1919. 'Enclosure to Circular Minute 12/1920' Ministry of Labour, Employment Department.

<sup>62</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Training and Employment of Disabled Ex-Service Men. p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> Robert A. Hart, 'General Human Capital and Employment Adjustment in the Great Depression: Apprentices and Journeymen in UK Engineering,' Discussion Paper No. 799, University of Stirling and IZA Bonn, June 2003.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, LAB/2/240/ED34351/1919.



This minute about the structure and role of apprenticeships was clearly important because a month later another minute stressed the significance of the previous note.<sup>65</sup> If nothing else, the concern about the future of apprenticeships suggests that the ideal was alive and seen to be critical to the future of youth employment and training. But while an ideal, the same debates that occurred pre-war concerning the decline of traditional apprenticeships continued well into the third decade. Pressure to address the issue increased as the deteriorating economic climate eroded the role of apprentices with many employers seeing them as a cheap, flexible alternative to more highly paid adults.<sup>66</sup> The TUC described the situation as, ‘today, under a bastard system of apprenticeship, the employer has escaped from all his responsibility without diminishing the obligations of the lads themselves.’<sup>67</sup> Their conclusion was that all apprentices should be apprenticed to the relevant union rather than an employer. Government response was to acknowledge a continuing decline but to claim that while they would continue to encourage apprenticeships, there was in reality little they could practically do.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, the government conceded that the country depended on a supply of skilled and educated labour, the lack of which might be ‘disastrous ... when the trade depression passes,’ although they concluded that decline was an inevitable result of mass production and the employment of machines,<sup>69</sup> exacerbated by the economic climate of the late 1920s.<sup>70</sup> In other words, government believed that issues around apprenticeship must be resolved by industry itself.<sup>71</sup> There were examples of ‘best practice’ as demonstrated by Fry’s chocolate company in Birmingham.<sup>72</sup> Here the apprentices worked for forty-four hours a week with little or no

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<sup>65</sup> TNA, ED34319/50/1919-J.

<sup>66</sup> McKinlay, ‘From Industrial Serf to Wage-labourer,’ p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> TUC Annual Report 1921, p. 261.

<sup>68</sup> House of Lords, *House of Lords Debate* (24 June 1925, vol.61, col.752-769).

<sup>69</sup> Machinery was blamed for destabilising the various grades of labour. This, it was felt, had an influence on the apprenticeship system, undermining its original purpose ‘owing to specialization of function,’ thus reducing the supply of fully trained workers. See E. Llewelyn Lewis, *The Children of the Unskilled* (London: P.S.King, 1924), p. 30.

<sup>70</sup> *House of Lords Debate* (24 June 1925, vol.61, col.752-769).

<sup>71</sup> *House of Lords Debate* (24 June 1925, vol.61, col.752-769).

<sup>72</sup> Fry’s, by this time were part of Cadburys, having merged in 1919.

overtime. The company paid for their evening-classes and arranged for them to attend technical school on one day a week.<sup>73</sup>

It is worthwhile understanding the developing views of the TUC about juvenile employment and apprentices at the beginning of the 1920s. In 1923 it noted that while it had a 'large adolescent membership,' it could be significantly increased with proper organisation.<sup>74</sup> Its annual report stated that there were over two million workers aged under eighteen who were eligible for membership, but unions had made little effort to attract them.<sup>75</sup> One of its observations was the lack of relevant training for juveniles, a fault for which the TUC accepted some responsibility. In its report for 1922, the TUC had recommended the formation of an Apprenticeship Training Authority.<sup>76</sup> This would include representatives from the employers, the relevant industry union and the education authority. The authority would distribute literature to schools about employment opportunities in various industries, advise applicants about their suitability for an industry, recommend young people to suitable employers, provide ongoing supervision to confirm that training was being undertaken, and to consult with local education authorities in regard to training, particularly with reference to the continuation schools that were planned under the 1918 Education Act. In a lower case footnote the report recorded that, 'in certain industries it will be necessary to include girls.'<sup>77</sup> One concern expressed by the TUC, in line with other observers, was that there existed a gap between juveniles leaving school and starting apprenticeships or other training. They also believed that much of the existing training for workers, both to age sixteen fourteen and later, was adult orientated and there was need for a system that better reflected the interests and desires of young people.<sup>78</sup> Their conclusion was that educational work for adolescents could not remain

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<sup>73</sup> 'Fry's,' *Western Daily Press*, 23 February 1926, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> TUC, Annual Report 1923, p. 140.

<sup>75</sup> TUC, Annual Report 1923, p. 140.

<sup>76</sup> TUC, Annual Report 1922, p. 172,173

<sup>77</sup> TUC, Annual Report 1922, p. 173.

<sup>78</sup> TUC, Annual Report 1923, p. 141.

‘almost wholly under the influence of bodies ... often hostile to the working-class movement.’<sup>79</sup>

In 1923, the TUC reiterated its position that apprentices were being used as cheap labour claiming that, ‘during the last half century boy labour has become almost as uncontrolled as ... women’s labour. It has been used largely as a lever in reducing wages and in many instances the boy has become a cheaper man.’<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless the TUC conceded they could do little more than state the principle that apprenticeship wages should be more than ‘nominal’ and reflect the true cost of subsistence.<sup>81</sup> The basis for this apparent retreat from coordinated action was because they believed that despite their best intentions nothing could effectively be done under the current ‘serious state of unemployment and the prolonged existence of trade depression.’<sup>82</sup> The TUC simply asked that affiliated unions would work with the proposed guidelines when circumstances were ‘more propitious.’<sup>83</sup> By 1926 the TUC were simply acknowledging that ‘it is an important function of the Trade Unions to supervise the entry, training and progress of juvenile workers in an industry.’<sup>84</sup> Subsequently, in 1928, the TUC broadly adopted the programme of the International Federation of Trade Unions for enlisting youthful workers and apprentices to the union movement. The aspirations were:<sup>85</sup>

1. Prohibition of wage-earning work until year fourteen completed.
2. Compulsory attendance at elementary school until admittance to wage-earning work.
3. Compulsory vocational instruction until completion of eighteenth year.
4. Establishment of forty-eight hour week to include vocational training and ‘clearing up’ time.
5. A free Sunday and one other half day per week.
6. No night work for young workers.
7. Three weeks paid holiday for those under sixteen and two weeks for those between sixteen and eighteen. To be in addition to public holidays.

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<sup>79</sup> TUC, 1923, p. 140.

<sup>80</sup> TUC Annual Report 1923, pp. 172,173. It was also a subject for socialist novelists; ‘you obtained money from his mother under the pretence-that you were going-to teach him a trade-but for the last twelve months-you have been using him-as if he were-a beast of burden.’ Robert Tressell in the novel, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (manuscript, TUC History online, 1912), p. 1632.

<sup>81</sup> TUC Annual Report 1923, p. 149.

<sup>82</sup> TUC Annual Report 1923, p.151.

<sup>83</sup> TUC Annual Report 1923, p.151.

<sup>84</sup> TUC Annual Report 1926, p. 186.

<sup>85</sup> TUC Annual Report 1928, p. 255.

8. Regulations for the welfare, unemployment relief and the training of unemployed juveniles.
9. Regulations for vocational training in which Trade Unions would have equal rights with relevant employers.

Several major industries also undertook a detailed review of the employment and training of apprentices in the mid-twenties.<sup>86</sup> From this it is clear that although concern existed that traditional apprenticeships were in decline, they nevertheless continued in significant numbers across many important industries.<sup>87</sup> The only major employer of boys that did not report an on-going apprenticeship scheme was the textile and clothing industry where ‘the great majority of firms did not employ apprentices in any occupation.’<sup>88</sup> The reasons given were that the textile industry was based on production by automatic or semi-automatic machines which required minders but not skilled employees. The building trade, as shown later, was generally reluctant to change working practices after the war, but the numbers of apprentices were still substantial. In 1925-26 the industry employed 920,000 workers of which 107,000 were under the age of twenty-one and of these it was estimated twenty-one per cent were apprentices working with some form of written agreement and forty per cent who had verbal agreements. Apprenticeships began at the age of fourteen, fifteen or sixteen with forty-two per cent of apprenticeships being for five years, twenty-one per cent for six years and nineteen per cent for seven years. Most apprentices joined direct from elementary schools, with only a very small number of specialist firms preferring boys from technical or secondary schools and boys were primarily recruited through personal application, with the sons of employees being given preference. A few boys were recruited through the Juvenile Employment Committees and

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<sup>86</sup> Report of an Enquiry into Apprenticeship and Training for the Skilled Occupations in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8.

<sup>87</sup> For apprenticeships in engineering between 1925 and 1938, where in 1925-26, 32% of males aged under twenty-one were apprenticed against a figure of 2.6% in industry generally, see: Robert A. Hart, ‘General Human Capital and Employment Adjustment in the Great Depression: Apprentices and Journeymen in UK Engineering’ *Oxford Economic Papers* 57 (2005), pp. 169-189.

<sup>88</sup> Report of an Enquiry into Apprenticeship and Training 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, pp. 5-7.

Labour Exchanges. The average wage was between 8s. and 15s. per week with the highest paid in London, the Midlands and Scotland, and the lowest in the southern counties.

Other major employers of apprentices from the age of fourteen were engineering, shipbuilding and ship-repairing and other metal industries. Apprenticeships were normally for five years with ninety-nine per cent of apprentices completing their term by the age of twenty-one. Most began between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, with those starting at fourteen normally serving a seven-year apprenticeship.<sup>89</sup> The average wage for an apprentice in the first year was 10s. 7d. per week rising to 25s. 8d. in the final year.<sup>90</sup> The number of apprentices to adult workers varied significantly depending on the size of firm, with union agreement ranging for a ratio of between one to four or one to five per journeyman. In reality across all companies the proportion was one apprentice or learner to nine male workers while in larger firms, employing more than 1,000 workers, the proportion was no more than one apprentice to eighteen adult workers. As in the building trade, most were employed from those making personal applications, with a substantial number of firms recruiting the sons or relatives of existing employees. Some boys were hired from juvenile employment bureaux or labour exchanges although most firms were able to recruit sufficient boys through newspaper advertising, by recommendation of people associated with their business, or at the works' gate. Most boys were selected with an elementary education but reflecting the more technical nature of the work in the electrical and mechanical, motor and general engineering trades, many firms preferred boys who had attended secondary or technical schools.<sup>91</sup> A significant number of firms also recognised the importance of on-going technical training and provided facilities for apprentices to attend technical day or evening classes at appropriate schools, with some employers making the attendance at day or evening classes compulsory. As with apprentice

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<sup>89</sup> Report of an Enquiry into Apprenticeship and Training, 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, pp. 6,7.

<sup>90</sup> Apprenticeship and Training, 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Apprenticeship and Training, 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, p.14.

numbers, there was wide variation of wages paid depending on the size of firm and the industry involved but the average first year wage was 10s. 7d. per week, with the range between 8s. and 12s and an average in the final year of 25s. 8d. with the range between 20s. and 32s. per week.

In the printing and allied industries there were 11,594 apprentices and learners; fifty-four per cent were indentured apprentices and thirty-four per cent were employed with verbal agreements.<sup>92</sup> The learners (twelve per cent) were primarily employed as warehousemen copyholders and layers-on although a few were employed as machine assistants. Apprentices normally entered the printing occupations at the age of fourteen but for journalism and process work the usual age for commencement was sixteen. Apprenticeships were usually for seven years. There were various agreements with the trade unions concerning the employment of apprentices, in general concerning the number of apprentices employed, the length of training and the level of wages. Common agreements limited the number of apprentices to journeymen to 3.3 although in practice the general proportion was 5.5. Most apprentices were employed from elementary schools with a usual starting age of fourteen. In some cases, employers were in direct contact with schools although apprentices often came through juvenile employment committees or labour exchanges.<sup>93</sup>

If the identification of 'genuine skill' is necessary to define apprentices in the evolving industrial centres, it is arguable that in rural environments like Devon little had changed since the nineteenth century. Industrialisation was not core to the economy of the county, except for a few businesses in Exeter and Plymouth (the dockyard is dealt with separately, later in this chapter), and the type of employment available to potential apprentices remained much as it always had. To put this into perspective, analysis of nearly two hundred and fifty vacancies for

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<sup>92</sup> Apprenticeship and Training, 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Apprenticeship and Training for the Skilled Occupations in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 1925-26. British Library, B.S.23/8, pp. 16,17.

boy apprentices advertised in local newspapers produces the range of employment opportunities shown in Table 7.2 with very few being in industrialised industries.<sup>94</sup>

**Table 7.2.** Jobs advertising for male apprentices in Devon: 1900-1909

	Number
Drapery	38
Butcher	30
Tailoring	20
Printing	17
Shoeing and General Smithing	15
Bakery	14
Grocery	10
Iron Mongering	9
Outfitting and Clothing Retail	7
Newspaper Reporting and Journalism	6
Wheelwright and Coach building	6
Carpentry and Joinery	4
Jewellery Retail and Watch Making	4
Harness and Saddle Making	3
Chemist/Pharmacy	3
Book Selling	3
Painting and Decorating	2
Woollen Trade	2
Motor Works	1
Brewery	1
Wine and Spirit Merchant	1
Store man	1
Railway Yard	1
Plumbing and Tin Plate Work	1
Boot Making	1
Restaurant Business	1

The list is not definitive because it cannot include those apprenticeships taken up as a result of recommendations from schools or relatives and friends.<sup>95</sup> In addition, it potentially under-reports the total number of advertisements because, in including only one from an apparent series, it excludes the possibility of more than one apprentice being sought by an employer. As

<sup>94</sup> The newspapers were; *The Western Times*, *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, *The North Devon Journal* and *The Tiverton Gazette*. Only one advertisement is included where it is deemed to be part of a series.

<sup>95</sup> For details on nineteenth century agricultural labouring and apprenticeships in Devon: W.G.Hoskins, 'The Farm Labourer through Four Centuries,' *Devonshire Studies* (London: Cape, 1951), pp. 419-441.

an example, missing from the list is the engineering company Willey and Co., of Exeter, specialising in gas metres, apparatus and fittings manufacturing, who sought twenty apprentices ‘to learn any of the various branches of the Wood and Metal Trades.’<sup>96</sup> They seem to have addressed the issue of the gap between leaving school and the starting age of traditional apprenticeships by seeking applicants who had not exceeded the age of fourteen at their last birthday and for the first three years of a seven year apprenticeship their apprentices would attend ‘the new Manual Schools or University College.’<sup>97</sup> Because it appears the firm carried the costs for this education it follows that Willey’s would almost certainly have invested in formal in-work training over the following four years, thus giving the successful applicants genuine skills and the unambiguous status of recognisable traditional apprenticeships. Another advertisement for multiple apprenticeships was placed by the North of England Steamship Owners Association who sought apprentices on behalf of their members for positions on steamers and sailing ships.<sup>98</sup> The advertising in Devon for northern owners matches evidence given to the 1907 Merchant Shipping committee by the Shipping Federation on behalf of their members. They sought ‘lads who have been about farms,’ and a Newcastle ship owner gave evidence that he largely drew his apprentices from ‘the West of England (Devonshire).’<sup>99</sup> The recruitment of farm lads is reflective of an apparent aversion to agricultural work, despite its benefits:

there is among young people a growing dislike of farm work, and this dislike is irrespective altogether of wages ... taking all things into consideration the farm labourer is better paid than many unskilled workers and labourers in towns. It is to be observed he does not have to serve an apprenticeship. He receives his food and his paid wages, from the very day he enters service, no matter how young or useless he may be, and he

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<sup>96</sup> *Western Times*, 28 January 1902.

<sup>97</sup> *Western Times*, 28 January 1902.

<sup>98</sup> *Western Times*, 12 February 1902.

<sup>99</sup> Merchant Shipping: Boy Seamen (Supply and Training of) 1907 [Cd. 3723] pp. 105-106, 163.



has the manifest advantage of not being cast adrift during periods of temporary sickness.<sup>100</sup>

The Admiralty Dockyards in Devonport was the one area of Devon where a significant number and wide range of apprenticeships existed. The annual average number of apprentices pre-war was 250, the war years saw numbers rise to 400, and 287 vacancies existed in 1919.<sup>101</sup> There were two forms of apprenticeship; in what were termed the old established trades and in the new operative classes. The established trades included shipwrights, ship and electrical fitters, boilermakers, coppersmiths, founders, joiners, painters, patternmakers, plumbers, rope-makers, sail-makers and smiths.<sup>102</sup> The new operative classes, subsequently referred to as junior apprenticeships, were in ship riveting, iron caulking, drilling, welding, ship plate machining, machine tool working and electrical wiring.<sup>103</sup> There appeared to be some flexibility in the categorisation of trades demonstrated by the promotion in 1919 of riveting, caulking and drilling to major trade status.<sup>104</sup> The difference between the two forms of apprenticeships was reflected in the entry examinations which were required for both categories, with the junior apprentices being deemed to be of significantly inferior quality; 'It should be noted that the boys required for the minor trades are of an entirely different type and standard from those entering the major trades'.<sup>105</sup> Entry to the major trades was by Civil Service examination which included the subjects of arithmetic, mathematics, English, history and geography, science and freehand drawing.<sup>106</sup> Candidates could not be older than sixteen or

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<sup>100</sup> Agricultural Gazette quoted in 'Labourers and Workers,' *Leamington Spa Courier*, 11 October 1901, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. (Plymouth JAC minutes 15/5/19).

<sup>102</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations for the entry of Apprentices to the various Trades in his Majesty's Dockyards at Home, December 1918, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations Concerning the Entry &C. of "Junior" Apprentices for Various Classes of Operative Work in H.M. Dockyards, August 1919.

<sup>104</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Ministry of Labour, Employment Department. Divisional Office, South Western Division, Plymouth Juvenile Advisory Committee. Resolution re apprentices for H.M. Dockyard. April 1919.

<sup>105</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Plymouth Advisory Committee, Memorandum on Dockyard Apprenticeship, 21/8/1919.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations for the entry of Apprentices to the various Trades in his Majesty's Dockyards at Home, December 1918, p.2 .

younger than fifteen. Potential junior apprentices, no older than eighteen, had to pass ‘a qualifying examination of sound elementary character’ which included the subjects of English, arithmetic, geography, general knowledge and freehand drawing.<sup>107</sup>

While no guarantees were given for long term employment prospects, with continuity of employment depending purely on the requirements of the Admiralty, in practice the services of most apprentices were retained.<sup>108</sup> Pay rates were comparable with those in other trades outside the docks; year one junior apprentices were paid 8s. per week, 10s. in year two, 14s. in year three, 20s. in year four and in year five 30s.<sup>109</sup> For comparison, in engineering the average weekly apprentice wage across the country varied between 11s. 5d., and 5s., in the building and wood working trades the rate was between 11s. 8d. and 5s. and on the railways 10s. to 6s.<sup>110</sup> The higher rates were more usual in London which highlights the value of an apprentice’s job in the dockyards.

The emergence of new dockyard trades and the associated differentiation between apprenticeships reflected the changing view of apprentices, or skilled workers, in the wider industrial world; at least in the dockyards the newer trades apprentices were actually designated apprentices, albeit as juniors. With regard to dockyard employment policies the old order was slowly changing. For example, the tradition for nominating candidates for junior apprenticeships had been that boys already employed in the relevant department were recommended by the officer in charge, but by the beginning of 1919 vacancies were also being notified through the Plymouth employment exchange. In these circumstances the Plymouth Juvenile Advisory Committee objected to the nomination system on the basis that it ‘opens the

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<sup>107</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations Concerning the Entry &C. of “Junior” Apprentices for Various Classes of Operative Work in H.M. Dockyards. August 1919.

<sup>108</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations for the entry of Apprentices to the various Trades in his Majesty’s Dockyards, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. Regulations Concerning the Entry &C. of “Junior” Apprentices for Various Classes of Operative Work in H.M. Dockyards, August 1919.

<sup>110</sup> Dearle, *Industrial Training*, pp. 250, 251.

door to, personal preference towards friends and relatives of dockyard officials and foremen and is liable to much abuse in many ways.’<sup>111</sup> Their recommendation was that those internally selected to sit the junior apprentices’ exam should have passed an initial efficiency test.

More generally in industry, the relationship between trade unions and apprentices during the 1920s was often fragile.<sup>112</sup> In many trades they vigorously perpetuated rules limiting the number of apprentices to a proportion of adult workers,<sup>113</sup> and from the end of the war the policy of the building trade unions had been to resist changes to working practices, including the obstruction of apprenticeship schemes, because of the perceived threat to adult employment; a policy that had the tacit support of the Labour Party.<sup>114</sup> Figures show that in 1921 the industry was training 21,000 apprentices whereas, if the agreed ratio of apprentices to adult workers had been fully adhered to, the number under training would have been 56,400, although as already noted, by 1926 the industry reported that it engaged more than 64,000 apprentices but their precise terms of employment is unclear.<sup>115</sup> There was also growing recognition of the need to accommodate the interests of younger workers within the union movement. The Shop Assistants Union, while campaigning to limit apprenticeship numbers, called for the TUC to appoint a body to look after the interests of young trade unionists.<sup>116</sup> Youthful workers were admitted to trade unions from the 1880s although it had been general practice not to formally register them until the last year of their apprenticeship, but by the middle 1920s some unions began accepting them when they first entered an industry, or when then reached the age of sixteen. Schemes were created by some unions to support new young members, including the appointment of mentors to educate them about the role of the union

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<sup>111</sup> TNA, LAB 2/177/ED34435/3/1919. MOL, Employment Department. Divisional Office, South Western Division. August 1919.

<sup>112</sup> McKinlay, ‘From Industrial Serf to Wage-labourer’, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Apprenticeship,’ *Daily Herald*, 30 January 1928, p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Labour and the Housing Shortage,’ *Western Chronical*, 26 February 1926, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> Report on the present position in the building industry, with regard to the carrying out of a full housing programme, having particular reference to the means of providing an adequate supply of labour and materials, 1924 [Cmd. 2104] p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Herald*, 30 January 1928, p. 6.

movement.<sup>117</sup> But while positive moves existed, others failed. The Amalgamated Engineering Union formed its youth guild in 1928 but it received little support from union activists and by 1930 it was dead.<sup>118</sup>

In conclusion, while it was difficult to apportion a single definition of apprenticeship in the early twentieth century, the in-work training of youths continued in some form, even if it included a more modern form of industrial trainee. The value of trade and technical schools were also seen as logical alternatives, indicated by the decision of the Birmingham Trade Council and by the example of the important (to Birmingham) gun trade where the lack of qualified workers, due to the disappearance of apprentices, led to them seeking funding to establish a special school for gun-making.<sup>119</sup> But in rural regions traditional apprenticeships continued, particularly in service trades like butchers, tailors, smithing, baking and printing. In the smaller towns traditional apprenticeships in craft workshops survived, certainly until the First World War. This was welcomed by industries in neighbouring bigger towns and cities as they were able to access experienced, trained workers without bearing the burden of formal training, or they acquired workers of a better quality than they could produce for themselves.<sup>120</sup> This study has shown that traditional apprenticeships (or something very close) continued in significant numbers in the larger, skills based industries, even if ultimately the numbers employed in any kind of formal training through apprenticeships or learner employment were relatively small in comparison to the total number of boys employed.<sup>121</sup> The members of this larger group were those who drifted into blind-alley employment, a situation seen by many as posing a challenge to society, both in the worry about a potentially unruly, underemployed

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<sup>117</sup> *Nottingham Journal* 3 January 1928, p. 15.

<sup>118</sup> McKinlay, 'From Industrial Serf to Wage-labourer,' p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> 'News of the Day,' *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 June 1900, p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> 'The Training of Youths,' *Leamington Spa Courier*, 17 July 1908, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> For similar conclusions and for a broad view of apprenticeships in the late Victorian and early twentieth century see: Cowman, *Apprenticeships in Britain c. 1890-1920*.

youth, and in the concern that Britain would fall behind its industrial competitors if it did not more fully train and utilise its younger workers.

## Conclusion

In 1909 the *Western Morning News* concluded that the issue of boy labour lay at the root of chronic unemployment, juvenile criminality and hooliganism.<sup>1</sup> The Edwardian era was, however, a period of significant change epitomised by social reforms, and this thesis concludes that the greatest impact was on the lives of children and juveniles through the reform of education and a focus on the employment of young people.

This thesis argues that the late-Victorian enfranchisement of millions of working-class men, and the changing face of industry as it moved decisively from craft to factory-based manufacturing, indicated to many that there was a material change in society. Government, both local and national, became more directly involved, particularly in areas affecting young people, including reform of the education system (1902 Education Act), employment reform (1903 Employment of Children Act), and the introduction of juvenile courts in 1908 with a remit not only to punish but also to consider the welfare of youths brought before them.

Victorian philanthropy which had been at the forefront of youth support became assimilated into an emerging social service state with projected efficiencies highlighted in the report of the 1909 Royal Commission.<sup>2</sup> The growing number of boys clubs and other organisations, while reaching a relatively small percentage of boys, had a positive influence in reducing adolescent crime, substantiated by the 1920 BOE report's conclusion that of all cases brought before magistrates less than five per cent were committed by club members.<sup>3</sup>

Concerns emerged about Britain's ability to successfully compete with industrial competition from rivals like Germany and America, and coupled with the poor performance in

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<sup>1</sup> *Western Morning News*, 1 June 1909, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 1909 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix volume XX. Report by Mr. Cyril Jackson on boy labour together with a memorandum from the General Post Office on the conditions of employment of telegraph messengers [Cd. 4632].

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 1 refers to local newspaper reports, police reports and the BOE Juvenile Organisations Committee Report on Juvenile Delinquency, 1920. British Library, GPA-7394.

the South African wars raised questions about the condition of boys and young men.<sup>4</sup> An emerging consensus, that the physical condition of young people was degenerating, appeared to be supported by the '1903 Memorandum by the Director-General, Army Medical Service,' which indicated a physical unfitness of many young men offering themselves for enlistment.<sup>5</sup> But the evidence presented by the army did not in fact indicate a general physical degradation of the juvenile population. The rejection of many potential recruits was simply the failure of some to match long established physical requirements such as height and weight, but with no indication they were in any other way physically unfit. This was supported by the 1904 Physical Deterioration Report,<sup>6</sup> and more recently a number of historians have claimed there was little proof of physical decline; debate being based more on apparent military failure and perceived economic weakening without any statistical support.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless widely held concerns about physical deterioration persisted until the start of the First World War when it evaporated in a wave of jingoism.

The importance of education in the transition of boys into the work-place is a key issue addressed by this thesis. Some historians believe educational developments between the turn of the century and the end of the Second World War were underwhelming with Paul Thompson excusing his lack of analysis on the grounds that there had been an absence of any critical developments.<sup>8</sup> This study takes a different view. The 1902 Act was the most substantial piece of education legislation since 1870 and it instigated a significant transformation of the

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<sup>4</sup> Germany had outstripped British iron ore production since 1896, and from 1902 America exceeded the output of Britain and Germany combined. 'The Iron And Steel Return,' *The Times* 19 Dec 1911, p. 17. Britain's share of world trade in manufactured goods in 1914 fell to twenty-five per cent, down from forty per cent in 1870. Richard Overly, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> 1903 Memorandum by the Director-General, Army Medical Service, on the physical unfitness of men offering themselves for enlistment in the army [Cd 1501] p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> 1904 Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix to the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Vol III. Appendix and General Index [Cd 2186].

<sup>7</sup> Vanessa Heggie, 'Lies, Damn Lies and Manchester's Recruiting Statistics: Degeneration as an "Urban Legend" in Victorian and Edwardian Britain,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 63:2 (2008), pp. 178-216, and, Elise Juzda Smith, 'Class, Health and the Proposed British Anthropometric Survey of 1904,' *Social History of Medicine*, 28:2 (2015), pp. 308-329.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians; the Remaking of British Society*, p. 14.

education system, particularly as it reflected the wide variations in regional and local social changes that existed in the early twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> It was beneficial for rural counties by providing for the survival of schools which became supported by local education authorities, where local school boards previously struggled to maintain sustainable institutions.

The 1918 Education Act initially appeared to legislate for practical reform in proposing to raise the compulsory school leaving age to fourteen and proposing compulsory attendance at day-continuation schools for all under sixteen by 1921. Because moves towards a more formal secondary education structure were subsequently abandoned in the face of government cuts, it effectively left the lifting of compulsory education to fourteen as the act's only surviving measure. It is easy to dismiss it, therefore, as part of what Thompson describes as a lack of critical development, and why Brian Simon has described the failure to extend most of its provisions as leaving it not marking any particular point in educational advance.<sup>10</sup> This study argues, however, that at the time of its parliamentary passage the act represented progressive thinking and that its proposals were subsequently referred to and advocated by a number of influential industrial and educational reports published during the 1920s, including those of Malcolm, Balfour and Hadow, all highlighting the value of education and its potential contribution to a skilled work-force.

The passing and enactment of legislation is undoubtably one way of measuring critical developments, but absence does not imply a barren period. BOE reports claimed that the climate for education reform changed, and that the 1918 Act would not have been possible before the war,<sup>11</sup> and the NUT observed in the 1920s that the public were now aware of the value of education and would no longer tolerate financial cuts affecting its effective delivery.<sup>12</sup> After the First World War the Labour Party also developed its own policies as advocated in

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<sup>9</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939' in *A Companion to Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 424.

<sup>10</sup> Simon, *Education*, p. 357.

<sup>11</sup> BOE report for 1917-1918 [Cmd.165] p.1.

<sup>12</sup> The Hadow Report and After, p. 6.



*Secondary Education for all; a Policy for Labour* in 1922.<sup>13</sup> So beginning with the 1902 Act, the debate over the role of education remained elevated throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, and to write them off as fallow or inconsequential simply because of an absence of legislation would be a mistake.<sup>14</sup> As Roy Lowe has argued, many of the developments in education since the Second World War had their genesis in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

The transition from education to employment was viewed by Victorian and Edwardian commentators as haphazard and a major contributor to the problem of blind-alley employment. This has been summarised as work that left young workers without skills excluding them from meaningful employment when they reached adulthood.<sup>16</sup> This study shows that blind-alley employment was exacerbated by a number of factors including the evolution of the manufacturing process, a decline in traditional apprenticeships, a rapidly growing distribution sector, and a stream of pupils leaving school at fourteen.<sup>17</sup> It concludes that while the nature of much work changed, there was an inevitability about a substantial proportion of young workers being caught in low skilled, poor prospect employment, circumstances that it can be argued persist today.<sup>18</sup>

National and local government initiatives were targeted at reducing the number of boys under fourteen in the workforce through the raising of the school leaving age and the imposition of restrictions on the working hours. Both Devon and Birmingham embraced nationally inspired initiatives by introducing byelaws restricting the hours of employment for those under

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<sup>13</sup> Tawney, *Secondary education for all*, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> William Garside has described the period after 1918 as a time when, 'the economic and social aspects of a higher school leaving age were never entirely divorced from the continuing debate over the future of British elementary and secondary education which developed with such vigour after 1918,' *British Unemployment 1919-1939. A Study in Public Policy*, p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> Lowe, 'Education, 1900-1939,' p. 426.

<sup>16</sup> *Problems of Boy Life*, ed., Whitehouse, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> W.R.Garside, 'Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,' *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 30 (1977), pp. 322-339.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, *The Times*, 12 November 2018, p. 43.

fourteen, even if there were initial objections in rural communities over restrictions imposed on agricultural work. Education and employment legislation, coupled with the growing ideological belief that youthful employment should be curtailed, were ultimately reflected in the 1918 Education Act and the introduction of compulsory education for all under fourteen, effectively removing them from the workforce.

If the period before 1914 was primarily defined by efforts to eliminate working by those under fourteen, the period from 1919 saw initiatives to regulate the employment hours of juveniles between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, particularly for those not covered by factory and workshop acts. The 1919 Ministry of Labour report into juveniles in employment confirmed that regional variations existed as a result of a lack of state regulation, and because juveniles ‘do not participate in the advantages obtained under trade agreements.’<sup>19</sup> This thesis has outlined the arguments around the status of juvenile workers in the 1920s and whether or not it was a golden age for them. It is concluded that while employment figures remained high relative to general unemployment figures, many jobs available to young workers were unsatisfactory, intermittent and unrewarding.<sup>20</sup> It has been shown there was also concern that although the economic climate was improving, industry was unlikely to be able to absorb the number of juveniles entering the market.<sup>21</sup>

Efforts to ease the transition from education to employment are shown to have produced the inefficiency of two national systems; employment exchanges as introduced by the 1909 Act and employment bureaux administered by local education authorities under the 1910 Choice of Employment Act. Disputes between education and employment authorities continued until 1928 with little proof that either system had been effective for juvenile workers with reports

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<sup>19</sup> TNA. LAB 2/822/ED34364/2017. p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Garside, ‘Juvenile Unemployment and Public Policy between the Wars,’ pp. 322-339.

<sup>21</sup> TNA. CAB/27/267. But the conclusions drawn by Ed Butchart should also be recalled, specifically that 1930s unemployment was not dissimilar to that of the 1920s, and that seemingly higher figures were simply a matter of more accurate reporting (Chapter 6, p. 183).

that only one boy in eight had found employment through employment exchanges or similar organisations.<sup>22</sup>

This study has shown how the decay or breakup of the apprenticeship system was considered central to the challenges facing boy labour. Many contemporary observers believed that traditional apprenticeships were dying with the introduction of modern manufacturing machinery rendering apprenticeship ‘unnecessary and useless,’<sup>23</sup> as *The Times* stated, ‘apprenticeship ... is no longer a method of training which is in harmony with modern industrial conditions.’<sup>24</sup> But it was recognised by others that modern industrial production required a variety of methods for teaching skills, and that while the traditional indentured apprenticeship system might not be applicable in modern industry it still had a place in smaller trades.<sup>25</sup>

The striving for clarity in defining apprenticeships is crucial in understanding its condition in the early decades of the twentieth century. This study argues that while traditional indentured apprenticeships had declined, the demise of the concept was exaggerated. The 1911 census warned that reported figures for apprentices might be understated because employers tended to identify only indentured apprentices as those justifying the title, whereas the teaching and acquisition of skill was changing as industry evolved.<sup>26</sup> Analysis of employment figures has shown that the warning in the 1911 census of under-reporting was justified as the instruction given to young workers who were not employed under the terms of traditionally indentured apprenticeships might, in changing industrial conditions, be considered apprentices in a more modern form.<sup>27</sup> Others have concluded that in many industries apprenticeships

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<sup>22</sup> Roker, *Economica*, 18 (1926), pp. 366-368.

<sup>23</sup> Urwick, *Study of Boy Life in our Cities*, p. 116.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Boy Labour and Unemployment,’ *The Times*, 14 December 1908, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> N.B. Dearle, *Industrial Training*, p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911. giving details of Areas, Houses, Families or separate occupiers, and Population: Vol. X. Occupations and Industries (Population: Census Returns, 1911) [Cd. 7018, 7019] p. cxlix.

<sup>27</sup> Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class*, p. 48.

continued in a form described as ‘shop floor practical training.’<sup>28</sup> The debate over the continuing health of apprenticeships continued throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, but this thesis argues that although traditional, indentured apprenticeships undoubtedly declined, in-work training of young workers within an evolving industrial environment frequently continued in some practical form.

The First World War has been considered separately when evaluating its impact on education policy and the employment prospects of adolescents. It has been suggested that while the war interrupted and accelerated many trends, it ‘rarely appeared as a major discontinuity.’<sup>29</sup> The NUT subsequently conflated the war years and those of austerity in the early to mid-1920s to claim there had been a slowing of growth in the education system.<sup>30</sup> But what became evident as the war progressed was the need for reform, with particular reference to secondary education. Over ninety per cent of witnesses to the ‘Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment after the War’ supported the idea of compulsory education at day continuation schools until the age of sixteen,<sup>31</sup> and the 1918 Education Act, subsequently proposed both the compulsory extension to school attendance to age fourteen and the introduction of obligatory attendance at continuation day schools for all juveniles up to the age of sixteen.<sup>32</sup>

The absence of adult men to the war effort led to high demand for young workers, making the wages available to them often greater than those of adults only a couple of years earlier, circumstances described in the national and local press across the country.<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> Keith McClelland cited in, *Education and Economic Decline in Britain, 1870 to the 1990s*, p. 33

<sup>29</sup> Robert J. Morris, ‘Clubs societies and associations,’ in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950*, 3. ed., F.M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1992), p. 420.

<sup>30</sup> The Hadow Report and After, ‘Being a statement by the National Union of Teachers upon certain recommendations of the Consultative Committee of the BOE, and upon the reorganisation of the educational system now contemplated by the Board,’ 1928, British Library, W73-5754, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Final report of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment After the War. Volume I. Report [Cd. 8512] p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Evidence and Appendices; of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in relation to Employment after the War (Education and Schools: Employment after War) XI.359 [Cd.8577] p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> Examples given in Chapter 6 include: ‘Boy and Girl Workers,’ *The Times*, 30 November 1918, p. 5.,

Ministry of Reconstruction (1918) drew attention to the problem of readjustment these boys would face.<sup>34</sup> Two thirds of boys who left school in 1917 had jobs without training or career prospects, with their hopes of post-war gainful employment diminished.<sup>35</sup> These were circumstances that exacerbated blind-alley employment as large numbers of unskilled boys, particularly those over sixteen, attempted to stay in a workplace where the supply of cheap labour exceeded demand. Ultimately, in the 1920s, conditions for the employment of unskilled adolescents were not dissimilar to those existing pre-war.

But if some sort of continuity returned in the 1920's, the great depression of the 1930s, with rapidly growing youth unemployment, and deliberation over education which ultimately fostered post-war reform,<sup>36</sup> suggests this is a starting point for further research.<sup>37</sup>

The question posed in the introduction to this study was: was there a perceptible difference in how both educational and employment legislation was experienced in rural communities like Devon, and urban centres like Birmingham? The particular needs and challenges faced by different communities were reflected in the speed of implementation of reform, and it has been shown how the difficulties experienced by rural communities where agriculture continued to be the predominant employer of young people, and where thinly spread

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'The Invaluable Boy,' *The Times*, 17 May 1916, p. 11., 'Notes in the West,' *Western Morning News*, 20 December 1918, p. 5: 'The New Year,' *Burton Daily Mail*, 8 January 1917, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in: 'Child Labor,' *Monthly Labor Review*, 8:3 (1919), pp. 217-222 (p. 219).

<sup>35</sup> 'The State and the Child,' *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 January 1917, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> The 1944 Education Act primarily aimed to remove the inequalities in secondary education in Britain, and finally raised the school leaving age to fifteen. Furthermore, it gave local education authorities the power to prohibit and restrict the employment of children. See; Bill [passed, cap. 31] to reform the law relating to education in England and Wales; [as amended in Committee] (Education).

<sup>37</sup> As noted in Chapter 6, Ed Butchart provides an interesting analysis of the decade. He argues that there has been little work produced on the reasons why unemployment in the 1930's was apparently so much worse than in the 1920s. One answer, he suggests, is that it has generally been accepted because of the global Great Depression, aggregate demand was lower. But he observes 'the adverse effects of the Great Depression were relatively modest in Britain, and the subsequent recovery was strong and sustained,' which, he advocates, means that fluctuations in aggregate demand were insufficient to explain unemployment figures. He concludes, 'that it may well be wrong to speak of the 1930s as having witnessed more serious problems of excess supply of labour than the 1920s.' E. Butchart, 'Unemployment and Non-employment in Interwar Britain,' *Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, 16 (University of Oxford, 1997).

populations made consolidation of schools harder to achieve, were still felt at the end of the 1920s; confirmed in reports by Marjorie Wise and the NUT.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, it is worth repeating José Harris's proposition that the period from late Victorian Britain to the first World War was a time when social problems were given unusual prominence in the wider study of ethics, economics, science and political thought.<sup>39</sup> This was particularly true in the case of boys and young men. For the first time they were acknowledged as a distinct group which, if it was to play a constructive role, required specific strategies to anchor it in society. The state took an increasingly active position in influencing their lives, particularly as it defined compulsory education, regulated the hours of younger workers, and through the creation of juvenile employment bureaux sought to improve the route to employment. But as the country emerged into the 1920s many of the challenges that existed before the war persisted. Government sponsored committees like Hadow and Balfour, and distinct and cogent education policies from bodies, including the Labour Party and the NUT all demonstrated the importance attached by educationalists and industrialists to the training of the future workforce. A salutary conclusion, however, is that for all the initiatives between 1901 and 1930, and the influences of post Second World War reforms, the challenges for many working-class juveniles to access good education and reasonable, secure employment are today, demonstrably the same.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Many examples are given in the thesis of how the initial reception was lukewarm to proposed reform in education and employment practices, particularly in rural areas like Devon, with examples including the Juvenile Unemployment Committee report of December 1923 (TNA; Kew. CAB 27/195) which highlighted how unpopular the lifting of the school leaving age to fifteen would be. In addition, the Kingsbridge guardians' formal objection to the 1912 Devon bye-laws fully quoted in Chapter 4, reflected their views of the economic value of boy employment to many families and the perceived value of early agricultural training.

<sup>39</sup> José Harris, 'The Webbs, The Charity Organisation Society and the Ratan Tata Foundation: Social policy from the perspective of 1912,' in *The Goals of Social Policy*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> 'Church calls summit to save rural schools,' *The Sunday Times*, 25 November 2018, p. 19, and 'We must not ignore plight of low-paid men as we once ignored working women,' *the Times*, 12 November 2018, p. 43. Also, 'Class privilege remains entrenched as social mobility stagnates,' Andy Brigid Francis-Devine Powell, 'Youth unemployment statistics,' Social Mobility Commission, 30 April 2019. Briefing paper, 5871 (House of Commons Library, 11 June 2019). And, 'the characteristics of youth unemployment have changed little in the seventy years that have elapsed since the subject was first seriously investigated,' Mark Casson, 'Youth Unemployment in Historical Context,' in: *Youth Unemployment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979), p. 9.

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